CHINA DAILY

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An honor guard carries the remains of Comrade Jiang Zemin in Beijing after they were transferred from Shanghai aboard a special flight on Thursday afternoon. President Xi Jinping and other Party and State leaders received Jiang's remains at Xijiao Airport in Beijing and extended deep condolences to Jiang's relatives. XIE HUANCHI / XINHUA

Jiang's remains arrive in Beijing

Solemn scenes as honor guard carries casket from plane

By XU WEI
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The remains of Comrade Jiang Zemin, an outstanding leader whose high prestige is acknowledged by all members of the Communist Party of China, the entire military and the Chinese people, were transferred to Beijing from Shanghai aboard a special flight on Thursday afternoon.

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President Xi Jinping, who is also general secretary of the CPC Central Committee, and other Party and State leaders received Jiang's remains at the capital's Xijiao Airport, where they extended deep condolences to Jiang's relatives.

The national flag was flown at half-staff at the airport, and black banners reading "Eternal glory to Comrade Jiang Zemin" and "Comrade Jiang Zemin always lives in our hearts" were displayed at the venue.

Xi, his wife Peng Liyuan, and others, wearing black armbands and with white flowers pinned to their chests, stood solemnly on the tarmac.

The special flight arrived at 3:55 pm, and an honor guard of 12 then slowly carried the late Chinese leader's casket from the aircraft.

Bearing the casket, they marched before the mourners gathered at the airport, as Xi and other senior officials bowed three times and looked on as the guards then conveyed the casket to a hearse.

The remains of Comrade Jiang Zemin arrive in Beijing on Thursday.
LI XUEREN / XINHUA

The national flag flies at half-staff at Tian'anmen Square on Thursday.
ZOU HONG / CHINA DAILY

Members of the office of Comrade Jiang Zemin's Funeral Committee, which was formed on Wednesday, and Jiang's relatives escorted his remains.

Before the solemn event in Beijing, a ceremony was held at Huadong Hospital Affiliated with Fudan University in Shanghai at 12:10 pm, as members of the office of the funeral committee, top officials in Shanghai, members of Jiang's family, friends and medical workers bade farewell to the late Chinese leader.

They escorted the casket to Shanghai Hongqiao Airport, while members of the public in Shanghai lined the streets to pay tribute to Jiang.

Jiang, who passed away in Shanghai on Wednesday at the age of 96, has been hailed as a great Marxist, a great proletarian revolutionary, statesman, military strategist and diplomat, a long-tested communist fighter, and an outstanding leader of the great cause of socialism with Chinese characteristics, in a letter addressed to the whole Party, the entire military and the Chinese people of all ethnic groups.

He was the core of the CPC's third generation of central collective leadership and the principal founder of the Theory of Three Represents, said the letter.

In a gesture of utmost respect and mourning by the whole Party, military and people, the national flags at Tian'anmen Square, Xinhuamen, the Great Hall of the People, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, the Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in the Macao SAR and Chinese embassies and consulates in foreign countries are being flown at half-staff starting on Thursday.

In an announcement made on Thursday, Comrade Jiang Zemin's Funeral Committee said a memorial meeting for the late Chinese leader will be held on Tuesday at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing.

The committee said the event will be broadcast live, and called for local authorities and departments to organize Party members, officials and the general public to listen to or watch the live broadcast.

During the day of the memorial meeting, national flags across China, and those at the nation's embassies, consulates and other agencies stationed overseas will be flown at half-staff. All public entertainment activities will be halted on that day, according to the announcement.

People across the country will pay a three-minute silent tribute and horns and sirens will be sounded for three minutes as silence is observed at the memorial meeting on Tuesday morning.

No ceremony for paying last respects to Jiang's remains will be held, the committee said.

Minister lauds nation's progress in protecting biodiversity

By ZHU BAOXIA
and HOU LIQIANG

With increasingly stronger institutions for biodiversity conservation, China has made significant progress in protecting biodiversity resources and seen a remarkable increase in the populations of many endangered species, said Minister of Ecology and Environment Huang Runqiu.

Guided by Xi Jinping Thought on Ecological Civilization, China has made consistent efforts to enhance the top-level design of biodiversity conservation by improving management systems, mechanisms and policies, he said in an exclusive interview with China Daily in the lead-up to the second phase of the United Nations' COP15 biodiversity conference. Huang is the COP15 president.

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With the theme of "Ecological Civilization — Building a Shared Future for All Life on Earth", the largest UN biodiversity gathering in a decade will hold its next phase in Montreal, Canada, from Dec 7 to 19. In this phase, participants will meet to conclude negotiations and decide on the post-2020 global biodiversity framework.

The first phase of the conference, held in Kunming, Yunnan province, in October last year, included leaders' speeches and issuing of the Kunming Declaration.

In the past 10 years, China has drafted and revised more than 20 laws and regulations pertinent to biodiversity conservation, including laws on forestry, grasslands, fisheries and biosecurity, said Huang.

Besides a biodiversity conservation strategy and action plan for 2011-30 that was released in 2010, the central authorities also unveiled a guideline last year to further strengthen biodiversity conservation, he said.

For example, the guideline aims to increase China's forest coverage rate to 26 percent and the protection rate of wetlands to around 60 percent by 2035.

"We have elevated biodiversity conservation to a national strategy in China," the minister emphasized.

He also highlighted the country's system of protected areas with a focus on national parks.

To date, China has built its first five national parks, nearly 200 botanical gardens and 250 wildlife rehabilitation and breeding centers, he noted. With almost 10,000 protected areas of different types, China has brought 18 percent of its land territory under protection, Huang said.

In addition, China has drawn up ecological conservation redlines for 31.7 percent of its land territory, encircling areas with critically important or fragile ecological functions for protection, the minister said.

Thanks to the consistent efforts, China has managed to bring 74 percent of its key State-protected wildlife species under effective protection, and some rare and endangered wildlife species have seen their populations gradually restored, he said.

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Xi stresses key role of ties with EU

By CAO DESHENG
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President Xi Jinping urged the European Union on Thursday to adopt an objective and correct approach toward China, properly handle differences between them, promote high-level cooperation in various fields, and work together on global challenges to promote world peace and development.

Xi made the remarks in talks with European Council President Charles Michel, who was in Beijing for a visit to China.

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During their talks, Xi also mentioned Comrade Jiang Zemin, saying that Jiang passed away on Wednesday in Shanghai due to illness after medical treatment had failed. He said that when Jiang was Chinese leader, he attached great importance to the development of China-EU relations.

Jiang visited European countries many times, maintained close interactions with leaders of the EU and European countries, pushed for the establishment of the mechanism for the China-EU leaders' meeting, and promoted dialogue and cooperation between the two sides in various fields, Xi said.

Noting that China and the EU are two major forces upholding world peace, two big markets promoting common development and two great civilizations promoting human progress, Xi said that China-EU relations that maintain good momentum for further growth and adhere to mutual benefit and win-win results conform to the shared interests of both sides as well as the international community.

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YOUNG WORKERS DECIDE TO GO IT ALONE

Change of career paths brings challenges and rewards

By YU RAN in Shanghai
For China Daily

Many workers, especially the young, are opting to leave the traditional job market to pursue more flexible employment opportunities.

The majority of them do so after working for five to 10 years, according to a report released last year by Maimai, a social networking app for office employees, and iXigua Video, an online video service provider.

indepth

Su Lan, a human resources director based in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, said: "Young people nowadays have less financial pressure than those born in the 1970s and 1980s, as they grow up in a more open-minded society with more access to information. As a result, they have greater freedom to make their own decisions."

Countless people decide to change their career paths on impulse.

After breaking up with her boyfriend, Tang Xue, 24, resigned from her job six months ago to buy a farm in Anji county, Zhejiang.

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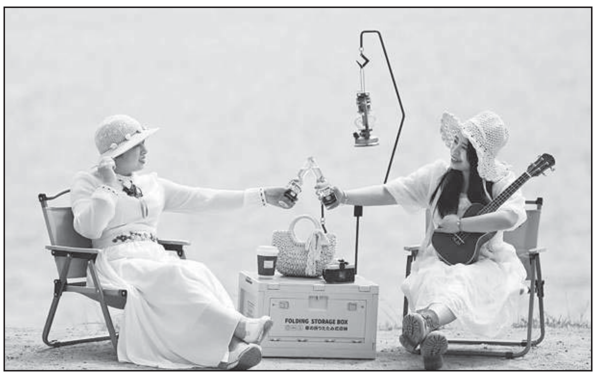

From left: Lu Sina, 28, works as a voluntary teacher at a Chinese school in Thailand in 2018. Lu (right)and her mother toast each other in Dali, Yunnan province, in June. Lu and a friend work at a cafe in Chengdu, Sichuan province, in March. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Jobs: Flexible employment on the rise

Tang Xue, 24, enjoys the open air on the farm she bought in Anji county, Zhejiang province, after resigning from jobs at three short-video companies. Tang saw the farm advertised online. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

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"I believe it is important to do things on impulse sometimes, as I did earlier this year. I chose to take control of my own destiny without worrying about becoming trapped in a meaningless job," said Tang, who worked for short-video platforms at three companies in Hangzhou after graduating from a university in Hunan province in 2019.

Tang saw a farm in Jinhua, Zhejiang, advertised online, and was attracted by prospect of working in the open air, escaping stressful urban life, making new friends, and finding the ideal lifestyle.

"I thought that changing the course of my life might pose a risk, but I was willing to take it. It is never too late to restart my career, as I am a smart person with excellent abilities," said Tang, who worked at the farm in Jinhua for a few months before buying her own in Anji earlier this year.

To realize her dream of buying a farm, she took an online training course on agricultural operations. Her small farm covers 1.3 hectares and boasts a 160-square-meter courtyard. She plans to run the farm as a "shared vegetable field" project, with customers ordering the produce she grows.

"It's good to see more people deciding to resign from their jobs, as this gives them increased freedom. Gradually transitioning from a stable job enables you to gain more experience and confidence, gradually find your real self, and take control of your life," Tang said.

She added that she will not be returning to the traditional job market.

According to a survey on "naked resignations" released last year by 51Job, one of the biggest human resource service companies in China, the two main reasons for such resignations are too much pressure and boring work. "Naked resignations" refer to people quitting their jobs without any backup plan, or without knowing where their next pay check is coming from.

Some 30 percent of the interviewees planning such resignations said they would save more than six months' salary before leaving their job without a future career plan.

Heavy schedule

Shen Yiming, 28, who left his job in 2020 after working in the tourism industry for more than three years, decided to take a break from the high-pressure work and uncertain career prospects.

"Although I made more than 30,000 yuan ($4,254) a month if I performed well, I failed to see a future for myself, as I was swamped by work all day long. My income also fell sharply due to a slowdown in the industry," said Shen, who worked as a travel consultant in Hangzhou after graduating from Jiaxing University in 2017.

Initially, he devoted himself fully to his work, becoming the leading consultant in his department due to his ability to draw up popular travel plans. However, the relentless high-pressure work schedules forced Shen to rethink his career.

He decided to do something he enjoyed. As he was fond of traveling and writing travel blogs in his spare time, Shen spent 12 months journeying throughout China last year on his savings, while continuing to earn money by working on cultural and tourism projects as a freelancer.

"I always bear in mind that if I run out of money, or if things don't go as planned, I still have the ability to find a job again and become one of the best-performing employees in the sector," he said.

Shen's self-confidence was rewarded when he was contacted by several brands to promote products in his travel blogs of his nationwide travels, during which he was posting photos of his destinations online.

"I don't think it is all about luck. I have been rewarded for my persistence over the years. I constantly post my travel blogs with eye-catching photos and other content. In this way, I give myself work and a promising future," Shen said.

At the end of last year, he created an account on Xiaohongshu, a life-sharing platform, and now has more than 300,000 followers for his travel blogs.

Shen, who aims to attract up to 800,000 followers within two years, is now focusing more on promoting brands for reliable clients. He takes photos and shoots videos, including those of products in stunning scenery. He also tries to find the best way to integrate products with his work, rather than blindly advertising them.

The number of monthly orders placed by Shen's clients has risen from about 10 in May to 30, and he is earning about 100,000 yuan per month.

"Although I am still busy with work all day, I enjoy the freedom and sense of fulfillment and achievement by being my own boss. I do whatever I like and also make money at the same time," he said.

Greater tolerance

As employees' attitudes toward work change, along with increasingly diversified employment methods in different industries, new forms of flexible employment are emerging.

Workers want flexibility in where, when and how they are employed. Since 2019, there has been an 83 percent rise in the number of job posts mentioning "flexibility", according to LinkedIn's Global Talent Trends Report issued in January. On individual companies' LinkedIn profiles, references to "flexibility" in posts rose by 343 percent over the same period.

Yu Hai, a sociology professor at Fudan University in Shanghai, said, "Traditional forms of employment have diversified in these fast-changing times, while society is showing greater tolerance for newly emerging occupations."

According to latest data from the

Shen Yiming, 28, celebrates the start of 2020 by climbing a volcano in Indonesia. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Lin Xiaobai (center) teaches beginners to draw at a workshop in Suzhou, Jiangsu province, in 2019. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Tang Xue works at a farm in Jinhua, Zhejiang, in August before buying her own farm in Anji.
PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

> Although I am still busy with work all day, I enjoy the freedom and sense of fulfillment and achievement by being my own boss."
>
> **Shen Yiming,** 28, who left his job in 2020 after working in the tourism industry

National Bureau of Statistics, by the end of last year, the number of workers in flexible employment in China reached 200 million — more than 1.6 million of them in livestreaming and other forms of new media, nearly a threefold year-on-year rise.

Rather than joining a company and leaving after several years, some college graduates choose a different course of action — including Lu Sina, 28, who works and lives in Hangzhou.

Lu launched a travel agency with a friend after graduating from Sichuan Conservatory of Music in 2016 with a major in culture industry management.

Short of social experience and long-range planning, Lu found running the small business too difficult and exhausting. After leaving the agency in 2018, she worked as a curatorial assistant in Guangzhou, capital of Guangdong province. She was also employed as a part-time butler at an inn in Moganshan, a scenic area in Zhejiang, and did a variety of other jobs.

Lu then became a voluntary teacher at a Chinese school in Thailand.

"Living in Thailand made me rethink my life and realize that I had to regain the passion for work," she said.

During her time in Thailand, she took daytime online courses in business operations and gave Chinese lessons to children in the evening. Lu also earned 2,000 to 10,000 yuan a month from time to time as a freelance travel adviser.

However, she started to worry when she saw her former university classmates being promoted, earning high salaries, buying property, and getting married.

As a result, Lu obtained a professional certificate to operate new media — receiving 10 job offers after applying for 20 positions within two weeks.

Armed with what she learned from the courses and voluntary work, she returned to Hangzhou in 2019 to work as operations supervisor at a domestic maternal and infant products brand.

However, after working at the company for two years, she decided to pursue flexible employment again — this time making detailed plans and preparing about nine months in advance.

"I kept asking myself what I would do for a living without relying on any particular company. I eventually decided I wanted to be an operations consultant offering professional advice on product operation and promotion," Lu said.

She started taking courses on operations consulting in September last year, and resigned from the company in March with 300,000 yuan in her savings account.

To be self-disciplined while working on her own, Lu carefully plans her daily schedule. "I want to manage myself as a company," she said.

Lu currently works three days a week as an independent operations consultant and career planner, earning 15,000 yuan a month on average.

As an operations consultant for two enterprises, she offers advice on producing goods to attract more consumers. She also counsels four individuals on promoting themselves on new media platforms.

Tough prospects

Lin Xiaobai, 36, from Chengdu, capital of Sichuan province, majored in business administration at Chengdu University, graduating in 2008. She then worked in human resources for a company in Chengdu, at a trading company in Shanghai, at a property agency and other companies in Suzhou, Jiangsu province, and finally at a bank in Nanchong, Sichuan, before deciding to leave the latter position in 2014.

"A few months after I started working at the bank, I realized it was not the life for me. I wanted to quit this boring and stressful work, even though I was earning a good salary," said Lin, who went through an unhappy divorce during this period.

She tried launching a creative design space selling collectibles in Suzhou in 2014, and also a studio in Sichuan for children to learn to draw, sew, and make handicrafts and clay figures. She also launched a creative talent education program with a partner. All these projects failed, as Lin kept losing money and incurring debts.

At the time, she described herself as a person full of ideological thoughts, but without any business plan or management experience.

"Working on your own requires an extremely strong mind. You have to break out of your comfort zone, challenge the limit of your potential, and have the strength to make many risky decisions," said Lin, who has learned to be independent as a single mother and an entrepreneur.

She eventually drew inspiration from her interest in drawing, which she acquired a number of years ago.

Lin, who draws stick figures to express her feelings and views of daily life, has more than 400,000 followers on Xiaohongshu, and regularly cooperates with corporate brands.

In 2020, she launched online training courses to teach beginners to record their daily lives through drawing, attracting 1,000 participants.

"Drawing without constraints enables us to lead a positive and healthier life with enthusiasm and passion, as well as changing our beliefs and attitude toward life," she said.

Lin now begins each day with one hour of exercise followed by four hours of work.

Yu, the sociology professor, said: "People often decide to leave the traditional job market without planning their next move. This change in working patterns among the younger generation is irreversible and will have a profound impact on flexible employment in the future."

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TOP NEWS

Global leaders pay tribute to 'friend' Jiang

Late Chinese leader hailed as outstanding statesman linked with historic changes

By MO JINGXI
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Foreign leaders have sent messages to President Xi Jinping or through other channels to express their deep condolences over the passing of Jiang Zemin.

"The name of this outstanding statesman is inseparably linked with an important period in China's modern history, marked by great achievements in economic and social development and the consolidation of international positions," Russian President Vladimir Putin said in a message of condolence.

As a sincere friend of Russia, Jiang made an invaluable contribution to developing Russian-Chinese relations, Putin said, noting that his fond memories of such an authoritative statesman and remarkable person will forever remain in his heart.

Thongloun Sisoulith, general secretary of the Lao People's Revolutionary Party Central Committee and Lao president, expressed his deep condolences over the passing of Jiang, saying that Jiang made important contributions to the cause of socialism with Chinese characteristics.

As a close friend of the LPRP and the Lao people, Jiang played a guiding role in the development of Laos-China relations, he said.

Miguel Diaz-Canel Bermudez, first secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Cuba and Cuban president, sent condolences to the Chinese people, the Communist Party of China and the Chinese government over the passing of Jiang, saying that he was a dear friend of the Cuban revolution.

Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah of Brunei Darussalam said that as a great statesman, Jiang will always be remembered for his steadfast dedication in enhancing the overall wellbeing of his people as well as leading China into greater economic stability and prosperity. He said that he also appreciated Jiang's efforts in deepening bilateral relations.

Singaporean President Halimah Yacob said Jiang was a distinguished statesman who, through sustained economic reforms, led China on a period of rapid growth and development.

"Our thoughts are with the people of China during this period of bereavement," she said in a message of condolence.

Maldivian President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih said Jiang will be remembered as a visionary leader who made great strides in bringing socioeconomic progress for the people of China and also for his efforts in consolidating China's role as a significant contributor on the international stage.

Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev said in a message of condolence that Jiang had selflessly served in the name of the prosperity of China, and enhanced the country's authority in the international community. He said that Jiang made a significant contribution to the strengthening of Kazakhstan-China friendship and "will forever remain in the memory of our peoples".

Tajik President Emomali Rahmon spoke highly of Jiang's contributions to promoting China's development, saying that the Tajik side commends Jiang's role in establishing, strengthening and expanding friendly relations, good neighborliness and beneficial cooperation between Tajikistan and China.

Alexander Lukashenko, president of Belarus, said that Jiang made a great contribution to the revival of the great Chinese nation, which allowed China to become a powerful and economically prosperous state. He also said that Jiang built the foundations of Belarusian-Chinese relations, and contributed to their steady strengthening over many years.

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas said that he and the Palestinian people will always remember the outstanding leader and that Jiang was a supporter of the Palestinian people's just cause, a promoter of Palestine-China relations and a witness to the two countries' establishment of diplomatic relations.

On Wednesday, the United Nations Security Council observed a minute of silence in memory of Jiang.

First snow in Hangzhou

Visitors enjoy the snow at the West Lake scenic area in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, on Thursday. The city recorded its first snowfall of the winter as temperatures dipped across central and western Zhejiang. LONG WEI / FOR CHINA DAILY

Biodiversity: Country will consider special legislation

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For example, Huang said, over the past 40 years, the population of wild giant pandas has increased from 1,114 to 1,864. In 1981, only seven wild crested ibises were found in Yangxian county of Shaanxi province, but the population of the bird known as "the oriental gem" has now reached over 5,000, he said.

The minister vowed a series of measures to accelerate the mainstreaming of biodiversity conservation in China.

Aside from updating the national biodiversity conservation strategy and action plan, China will consider special legislation on biodiversity, he said.

"Amid the crisis and challenge of biodiversity loss, we must firmly seize the opportunity of COP15 … to mainstream the biodiversity conservation process in an accelerated manner and strive to usher in a new chapter of biodiversity conservation," he said.

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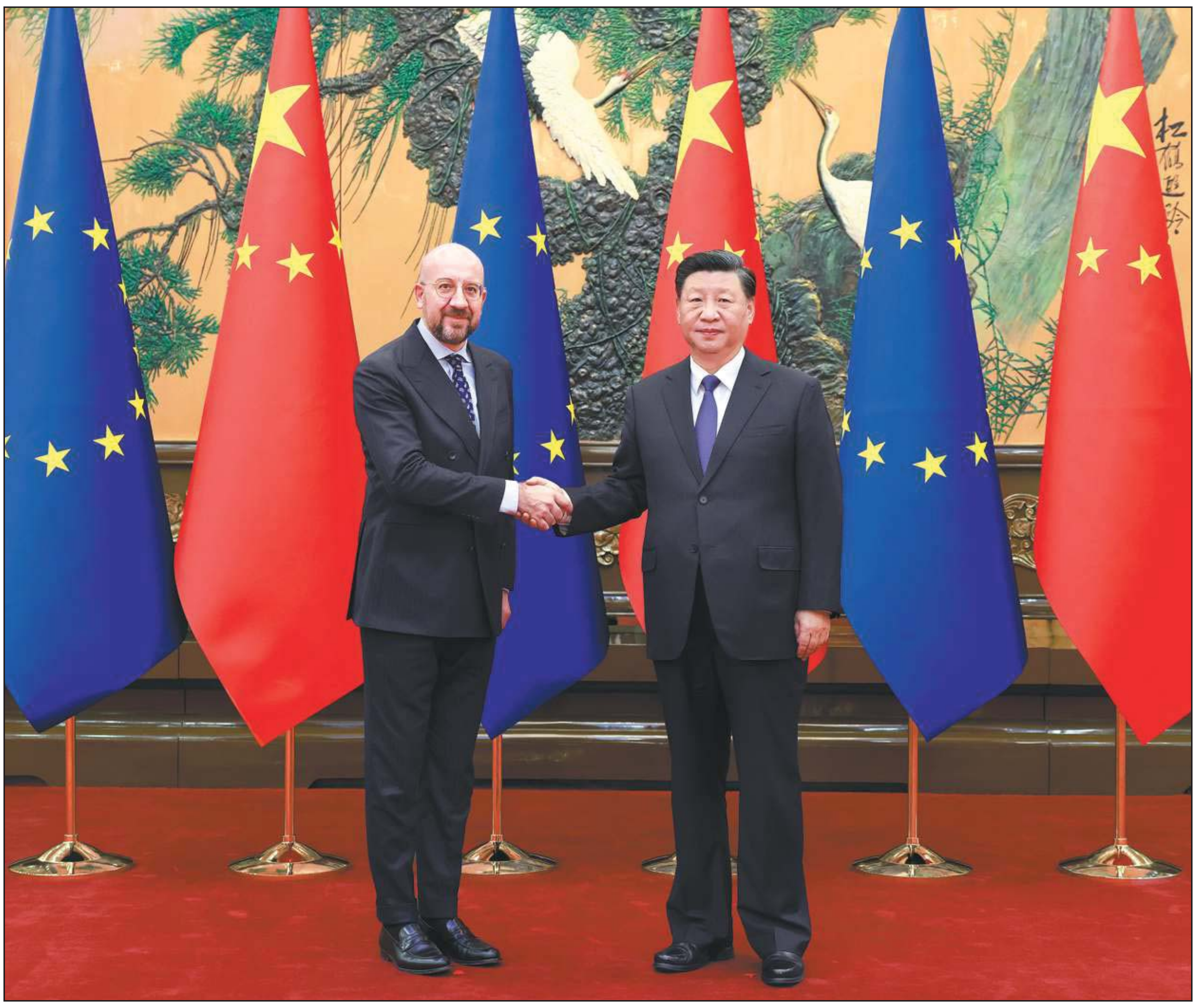

President Xi Jinping meets with European Council President Charles Michel in Beijing on Thursday. DING LIN / XINHUA

Relations: Nation to intensify strategic communication

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The more turbulent the international landscape becomes and the more prominent the challenges are, the greater the global significance that China-EU relations enjoy, he said.

China will continue to view and develop its relations with the EU from a strategic and long-term perspective, and stands ready to intensify strategic communication and coordination with the EU to advance the steady development of their comprehensive strategic partnership, Xi said.

Xi briefed Michel about the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China as well as the Chinese path toward modernization, saying that China's development represents the growth of forces to promoting world peace.

He assured the EU leader that China will never seek hegemony or engage in expansion, stating that this is a solemn political commitment of the CPC and also reflects the will of the more than 1.4 billion Chinese people.

The nation has the confidence and capability to constantly inject certainty and stability into the world with its own stable system, governance, policy and development, Xi said.

Noting that Chinese modernization and European integration are their respective future-oriented choices, Xi said that China hopes the EU will be its partner in pursuing the Chinese path toward modernization and enjoy the opportunities of its huge market, its institutional opening-up and its efforts to strengthen international cooperation.

He stressed that there are no strategic disparities and conflicts between China and the EU, and China supports the strategic autonomy of the EU and the unity and prosperity of Europe. He expressed his hope that the EU could reject the Cold War mentality and ideological confrontation, and oppose various forms of a new "Cold War".

He called for maintaining communication and consultation between China and the EU on their differences with a positive attitude, with emphasis on respecting each other's major concerns and core interests, particularly in terms of respecting sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity and noninterference in domestic affairs, to jointly uphold the political foundation of China-EU ties.

China is willing to hold a human rights dialogue with the EU based on equality and mutual respect, he added.

Xi reiterated China's commitment to high-standard opening-up to the rest of the world, and welcomed the EU's continued involvement in the nation's efforts to build a new development paradigm for win-win cooperation.

Both sides should strengthen coordination in macroeconomic policy, leverage their strengths in markets, capital and technology, jointly boost growth engines in the digital economy, environmental protection, new energy and artificial intelligence, and work together to ensure secure, stable and reliable industrial and supply chains, he said.

Xi urged the EU to work with China to oppose protectionism, decoupling and disruption of industrial and supply chains, as well as politicizing economic, trade and technological exchanges or using them as a weapon.

While reaffirming that China will remain open to European enterprises, Xi expressed his hope that the EU would provide Chinese companies with a fair and transparent business environment.

In terms of strengthening international coordination and cooperation, Xi called for both sides to lead global efforts in coping with the challenges arising from climate change and biodiversity protection, energy and food security, and public health, and he welcomed the EU's participation in the China-proposed Belt and Road Initiative and the Global Development Initiative.

Michel congratulated Xi on his reelection as general secretary of the CPC Central Committee, and, on behalf of the EU, expressed his deep condolences on the passing away of Jiang Zemin.

He called China an important partner of the EU in upholding the United Nations Charter and supporting multilateralism.

Michel expressed the EU's willingness to promote dialogue and cooperation with China and properly handle their differences. He reiterated the EU's commitment to the one-China policy, respect for China's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and noninterference in China's domestic affairs.

Michel said that as China's reliable and predictable cooperative partner, the EU is willing to continue to work with China to advance the process of the China-EU investment agreement, enhance mutual trust in the stability of supply chains and intensify mutually beneficial cooperation.

The two leaders also exchanged their views on the Ukraine crisis. Xi said that a political settlement of the crisis conforms to the interests of Europe and the shared interests of all countries in the Eurasian region.

Under the current circumstances, efforts should be made to avoid the escalation of the crisis, Xi said. He called for facilitating peace talks, bringing the spillover effects of the crisis under control and remaining vigilant to the risks of confrontation between blocs.

China supports the EU in boosting its efforts to resolve the crisis and building a balanced, effective and sustainable security framework in Europe, he said, adding that the nation always stands on the side of peace and will continue to play a positive role in its own way.

Michel also met on Thursday with Premier Li Keqiang and Li Zhanshu, chairman of the Standing Committee of National People's Congress, the nation's top legislature.

China sets example in path to modernization, forum told

By ZHANG ZHOUXIANG and SONG PING

China's development — especially over the past 10 years — has set a good example for other developing countries to follow their own paths to modernization, scholars and experts said.

Their comments came at the Third Think-Tanks Forum on National Governance in Developing Countries on Thursday in Beijing. Hosted by the Party School of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (National Academy of Governance), the Institute of Party History and Literature of the CPC Central Committee, and Peking University, the forum was held both online and on site.

The forum was attended by officials and think tank representatives from China, Europe, the United States and over 20 developing nations in Asia, Africa and Latin America.

"There was a time when modernization was basically Westernization," said Professor Justin Lin Yifu, president of Peking University's Institute of South-South Cooperation and Development. "What Western nations have done, other nations must do, too; What Western nations think is important, was important for other nations, too."

While following such a strategy might be aimed at accelerating development, in reality it often failed, he said.

"China has done otherwise by doing the job under its own conditions, considering what it has as the basis, then deciding what to do," he said while analyzing the concept of Chinese path to modernization put forward at the 20th CPC National Congress. "To be oneself is the most important lesson that other developing countries could learn from China's development."

Wang Junwei, a senior researcher and director of the academic and editing committee at the Institute of Party History and Literature of the CPC Central Committee, said that the Chinese way of development was totally different from major Western powers' modernization over the past 500 years, which was dominated by the West following colonialist rules.

"The modernization of major Western powers is filled with blood and sweat from other nations, of which China is a main victim. Therefore, China will never seek hegemony even after it is well developed — it will help other developing nations instead," he said.

Ra'ed Mohamed BenShams, president of the International Institute of Administrative Sciences and head of the Institute of Public Administration in Bahrain, said that "there is no mode for development and modernization that applies universally".

"Different development modes apply in different environments and have their own reasons for success," he said in his speech. "China's development mode proves to be an important one that has promoted development of the nation. As we all have witnessed, China is climbing up the ladder of development.

"Chinese culture also contains wisdom and patience that provide us with a solution to cope with challenges. We need multinational unity and cooperation, investment in public management, and to build good governance to encourage innovative solutions to our problems."

Souphavady Larkhamsai, vice-dean of the Faculty of Public Administration, Lao National Academy of Politics and Public Administration, said China's opening-up policy had boosted international cooperation and understanding of China's method.

"There are both opportunities and challenges in the current era, and there is no country that can solve the problems alone," he said when addressing the forum. "On our path toward modernization, such policies and initiatives can lay a solid foundation for people all over the world, as well as encourage all nations to modernize together in an equal way."

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CHINA

Staff members sort newly collected historical relics at the Memorial Hall for the Victims of the Nanjing Massacre by Japanese Invaders in Nanjing, Jiangsu province, on Wednesday. WAN CHENGPENG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Relics added to massacre memorial hall

By CANG WEI in Nanjing
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The Memorial Hall for the Victims of the Nanjing Massacre by Japanese Invaders in Jiangsu province announced on Wednesday that it had collected 453 sets of historical relics so far this year, including evidence of "comfort stations", biological weapons and the militaristic education of Nanjing children by the Japanese Imperial Army during the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression (1931-45).

According to the memorial hall, one of its Japanese friends, Hitoshi Oto, helped it collect 51 of the historical relics in Japan.

One of the relics — the original diary of Japanese soldier Jun Arai — recorded in detail how he set off from Japan for China by ship with other troops and was stationed in several Chinese cities from Oct 12, 1937 to Sept 23, 1938.

It was also the earliest record of so-called comfort stations, established for sexual activity by the Japanese army in Nanjing after the comfort women system was officially established.

Comfort women were forced into sexual slavery after being captured by the Japanese army.

In his diary, the soldier recorded how the Japanese army treated wounded soldiers, robbed civilians, established "comfort stations" and fought the Chinese army, particularly how the Japanese army set up a "comfort station" in Nanjing on Jan 1, 1938.

In his diary for that day, he wrote: "A comfort station has been opened as of today. Everyone has 30 minutes. The cost is 1.5 yen (1 cent US) for a non-commissioned officer and 1 yen for a soldier."

"It is bustling with people and is full all the time," he recorded.

Meng Guoxiang, a professor from Nanjing Medical University and an expert on the history of Japanese aggression against China, said that the system of "comfort women" was a large-scale crime of sexual violence committed by the Japanese Imperial Army and was an institutional behavior of the Japanese government and the country.

"It was a violation of humanity and a blasphemy against civilization," he said. "How to treat the 'comfort women' issue has become a decisive test of whether Japan has enough sincerity and efforts to acknowledge the aggressive nature of the war and to face the future."

He added that the newly found evidence, together with formerly collected evidence, could refute Japanese right-wingers' denial and Japanese politicians' vague attitude toward "comfort women".

Oto also helped the museum collect more than 60 photos of the Japanese army's Unit 1644, which was as notorious as Unit 731, which committed heinous crimes and performed biological experiments on people in China.

According to Meng, the Japanese army established the unit on the site of what is now the General Hospital of the Eastern Theater Command in April 1939.

Disguised as the "Central China Epidemic Prevention and Water Supply Department", the unit was actually engaged in large-scale research and experiments on biological warfare and the use of poison gas, he said.

In December 1998, 41 skulls were unearthed near the site and were later confirmed as belonging to victims of the unit's experiments.

Ai Delin, director of the memorial hall's cultural relics department, said that the hall also collected a war diary of the 11th squadron of the 36th infantry regiment of the Japanese Army's ninth division.

"We found another war diary of the same army last year," he said. "It revealed Japan's invasion of China more comprehensively."

The Nanjing Massacre took place during Japan's invasion of the country. Starting on Dec 13, 1937, it continued for six weeks and about 300,000 Chinese civilians and unarmed soldiers were slaughtered.

FROM THE FRONT LINE | SHAANXI

Reforestation enriches lives on plateau

By LI HONGYANG
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The windswept ridges and landforms of the Loess Plateau in northern China's Gansu, Shanxi and Shaanxi provinces have undergone a two-decade transformation of reforestation, and the local people have been the beneficiaries, not just the environment.

In the village of Nangou in Wuqi county, Shaanxi province, Yan Zhixiong recalled his childhood when all the surrounding mountains were bare of plant life.

To tackle the environmental issue of over-farming and erosion, the government decided in the 1990s to launch a long-term campaign aimed at making the Loess Plateau green again. The campaign's aim was to return farmland to forest.

"When I was young, if the wind picked up, yellow sand was swept into the sky. The mountains were barren. If it rained, mud flows filled the valleys," 57-year-old Yan said.

The 20-year campaign has not only given us green mountains, but has brought solid incomes to the locals too, he said.

In 1999, villagers in Nangou joined the campaign and began returning their grazing land to forest, earning money from the government the more trees they planted.

The government also provided subsidies for grain, corn, buckwheat and millet and an additional 160 yuan ($22) per 0.067 hectare of land that was converted to forest.

The forest coverage rate in Wuqi county has increased from 8.4 percent in 1997 to 20.3 percent today.

In 2018, Bai Tao returned to Nangou and was elected the village's Party chief.

Seeing the potential in mountain and water resources, he decided to develop rural tourism in the village.

In the same year, Bai set up a tourism company. The initial investment of more than 12 million yuan came from an agriculture-related fund with villagers also pitching in their own money.

The locals got behind Bai and began to open homestays, operate shuttle buses for tourists and develop agritourism around apple orchards.

College graduate Liu Hu returned to his hometown to operate an apple orchard in 2017.

"The environment in and around the village is getting better each year, which has given many the confidence to start their own businesses," he said.

In recent years, beekeeping has become another popular agritourism business attracting visitors.

Last year, the per capita income in Nangou was more than 17,000 yuan, up from 660 yuan in 1996.

Kang Ruoming contributed to this story.

Teacher imprisoned for child molestation

By HUANG ZHILING in Chengdu
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A male tutor was sentenced to five years in prison for child molestation recently, and banned from working in close contact with minors for life, according to the Qingyang District People's Court in Chengdu, Sichuan province.

The man repeatedly committed indecent acts against a 10-year-old girl while teaching her one-to-one after school between December 2021 and May 2022, according to the court.

It is the first criminal case in Chengdu banning someone from working in close contact with minors for life since the Supreme People's Court, the Supreme People's Procuratorate and the Ministry of Education issued a guideline on those working in the education sector who commit violent crimes against children, including sexual assault, abuse, abduction or trafficking. It went into effect on Nov 15.

In order to prevent perpetrators from committing crimes again, the revised Criminal Law adopted in 2015 set forth provisions on employment prohibitions. The Law on the Protection of Minors revised in 2020 strengthened the protection of minors, adding a possible lifelong ban on working with minors.

When the guideline came into effect, the Haidian District People's Court in Beijing pronounced a verdict in a case where a teacher hired by a school was sentenced to imprisonment for child molestation and was prohibited from working with minors.

The teacher had molested a 10-year-old student several times during one-to-one teaching. In March 2022, the girl's family reported the case and the teacher was arrested.

Courts in Jiangsu, Henan, Heilongjiang, Gansu, Anhui and Liaoning provinces and the Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region have implemented the similar bans.

100 billion parcels sent so far this year

Despite disruptions caused by COVID outbreaks, couriers keep things moving

By LUO WANGSHU
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More than 100 billion parcels have been handled in China this year as of Thursday, evidence of the sector's resilience amid sporadic COVID-19 outbreaks, as carriers strive to maintain the flow of goods to meet people's demands, the State Post Bureau of China said.

A year ago, it took carriers until Dec 8 to handle the same number of parcels.

The 100 billionth parcel was a box of sweet pomelos from Pinghe county that was delivered to Xiamen in Fujian province.

China's parcel delivery industry has seen booming development in the recent decade. However, the sector is facing an unprecedented challenge this year due to the ongoing pandemic.

The excessive and stringent control measures in some regions have clogged transport and logistics networks and hampered the sector's smooth operation.

"To cope with the adverse effects, the bureau has carried out a number of measures to improve the sector's development," said Lin Hu, deputy director of the bureau's market inspection department.

Measures include implementing epidemic control in daily work to prevent the spread of the virus via parcel delivery and collection, he said.

It has established a working mechanism to unclog the main logistics network and blocked terminals caused by the epidemic.

> "More types of goods, especially more agricultural produce, are linked to the market through the express delivery network."
>
> **Xu Liangfeng,** an official with the State Post Bureau of China

It has also improved the quality of the sector's development, extending the network to rural areas, factories and overseas markets.

The extension of the parcel delivery network to rural areas has unlocked potential in the countryside market and boosted rural vitalization.

"With the rapid development of new types of e-commerce such as livestreaming sales, the source of the products has been optimized. More types of goods, especially more agricultural produce, are linked to the market through the express delivery network," said Xu Liangfeng, deputy head of the data management department of the bureau's safety center.

The sector has operated smoothly in eastern China, where the parcel delivery system is more developed. The sector in the central and western parts of China has also grown significantly. The national distribution of parcel delivery is improving, he added.

Jiang Chunlong, a courier in Pinghe county, collected the 100 billionth parcel on Thursday.

"Sweet pomelos are a featured local agricultural produce. In the harvest season, we couriers will go to orchards to help take boxes of fruits to the parcel delivery station and send them to places across the country," he said.

He usually collects 2,000 to 3,000 parcels a day. But during peak times, Jiang collects as many as 5,000 parcels to meet the needs of local farmers and e-commerce shop owners.

The 100 billionth parcel was sent by Cai Zexin, a local teacher who helps his parents send sweet pomelos to customers in his spare time.

The family grows and sells sweet pomelos. Cai's parents are responsible for growing sweet pomelos, but they are old and unable to use online payment, manage e-commerce or parcel delivery. The son takes care of the rest of the business, including sending the products to customers through the parcel delivery system.

"When I studied in Xiamen, my teachers and friends liked sweet pomelos from my home and I usually sent the fruit to them as gifts. The reputation has been built up and our regular customers buy sweet pomelos from my family every year at harvest time," he said.

Workers begin returning to iPhone plant

By SHI BAOYIN in Zhengzhou and LI LEI

Some 10,000 workers have returned to the world's largest Apple iPhone assembly plant in Zhengzhou, Henan province since Monday, and more are on their way, Foxconn said on Thursday.

The Foxconn plant has sent coaches to return them to employee dormitories in an arrangement known as "point-to-point transportation" aimed at avoiding infection during the journey. Upon arrival, workers need to go through a five-day health monitoring period before starting work, the plant said in a written response to China Daily.

The company has rolled out incentives to encourage employees to work in a closed-loop environment, offered psychological counseling and worked to ensure that warm clothes, food and other necessities are in abundant supply, it said.

"Under the guidance of epidemic control experts, a series of prevention and control measures have been taken, with a focus on balancing epidemic prevention and our production," the statement said.

As many as 300,000 workers work the assembly lines during the peak production season at the sprawling Foxconn plant in the Zhengzhou Airport Economy Zone, it has been reported.

The return of workers forms part of a broader effort by local authorities to ramp up production after a spike in COVID-19 cases in the provincial capital prompted a mass exodus of its employees in late October.

Many of those who returned this time live in Zhengzhou and surrounding areas, said a management official surnamed Li.

"We have arranged air-conditioned, newly painted dorms with new bed covers," he said, adding they have also disinfected the rooms and prepared N95 protective masks.

One of the returnees, who only gave her surname Guo, said she came back lured by the generous pay, and is currently undergoing health monitoring in her dormitory and expects to return to her post next week.

"The dorm and canteen seemed nice," said Guo, 25, who left the plant in late October and walked for more than a day before reaching her hometown Jiaozuo, which is 90 kilometers northwest of Zhengzhou.

Workers return to their dormitories at Foxconn's plant in Zhengzhou, Henan province, on Wednesday. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

> **10,000 workers**
> have returned to the world's largest Apple iPhone assembly plant in Zhengzhou, Henan province, since Monday.

To ease the shortage of workers, the plant also issued a notice asking employees to recommend experienced friends.

According to a recruitment advertisement posted online, new workers are entitled to a one-time compensation, such as the production stabilization and closed-loop management fees, which adds up to 6,500 yuan ($920).

Those who successfully recommended workers will be given 1,000 yuan as a reward, it said.

The effort to resume production has overlapped with the city's decision to end a five-day lockdown starting midnight Tuesday. The "mobility management" rules were aimed to halt the spread of an Omicron-fueled surge of cases in the city of 12.7 million. Zhengzhou Airport Economy Zone had made its own COVID-19 control rules and was not subject to the mobility management policy.

Zhengzhou reported 71 local confirmed cases and 319 asymptomatic carriers in the 24 hours ending midnight on Wednesday, according to the National Health Commission, a sharp drop compared with earlier last month.

However, nonessential travel across Zhengzhou's districts or departure from the city are still discouraged, according to a public letter addressed to Zhengzhou residents on Tuesday.

Visitors from out of town require negative test results from within 48 hours, and those from outside the province must test upon arrival in Zhengzhou and daily for another two days during their stay, it said.

The rules freezing mobility in Zhengzhou, a major agricultural area, have also created headaches for local farmers, as logistics issues have prevented large amounts of vegetables and other farm produce from reaching urban markets.

Chen Shiju, general manager of Xinkaiyuan, a cold-chain logistics company in Zhengzhou, said the mass shutdown of restaurants has also contributed to the problem.

The emergency has prompted the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs to launch a sales promotion program that pairs major farm produce markets nationwide with vegetable-growing townships in Zhengzhou.

Data provided by the ministry said 4,677 metric tons of vegetables were sold between Nov 22 and Monday through the partnership. Top buyers include markets in Shangqiu, Henan province, and those in Beijing, and Jiangsu, Hubei and Shaanxi provinces.

Qi Xin contributed to this story.

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CHINA

Nation's virus response faces new situation

Measures being fine-tuned to speed up orderly return to normal life, production

By WANG XIAOYU
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China's COVID-19 prevention and control work is facing a new situation and new tasks, with the weakening pathogenicity of Omicron, increasing uptake of vaccinations and growing disease response experiences, Vice-Premier Sun Chunlan said recently.

To speed up an orderly return to normal lives and production, some regions hit by the virus have begun fine-tuning their measures, such as lifting temporary control orders, waiving regular testing requirements for certain groups and allowing close contacts of confirmed patients to self-isolate at home.

During a meeting with top public health and medical experts in Beijing on Wednesday, Sun said China will "take small steps" to further upgrade its virus control policy and "keep moving", as well as continue improving its diagnostics, testing, treatment and quarantine measures.

She also stressed boosting mass immunization, especially among the elderly, accelerating preparations of drugs and medical resources, while ensuring a balance between disease control work and social and economic development.

Sun said that China has always put the safety and health of its people first during its three-year fight against the virus. Over the course, the country has released nine versions of disease prevention and control protocols and published a package of 20 modified measures, in accordance with the latest epidemic circumstances.

Its steady but agile action has effectively tackled uncertainties of the epidemic, she added.

A hallmark of the latest pandemic situation is that the dominant strain of Omicron and its subvariants are highly transmissible, but less virulent and less likely to cause severe diseases or deaths compared with the original novel coronavirus and previous key variants, according to experts.

"The diminished virulence of Omicron results from the changing nature of the virus, as well as expanding immunization across the population and timely provision of treatment," said Chang Zhaorui, a researcher with the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention, on Tuesday.

By Monday, the mainland had fully vaccinated just over 90 percent of its population, according to the National Health Commission.

The public's health awareness and knowledge have also improved significantly, Sun said during another symposium on Thursday with grassroots disease control workers.

Sun added that China has now gained effective diagnosis and treatment tools, drugs and traditional Chinese medications, creating more favorable conditions for further upgrading disease control policies.

She said enhancing triage systems at community medical centers, strengthening grassroots disease control and stepping up care for residents facing difficulties in their basic livelihoods and healthcare are required.

The mainland reported 4,080 confirmed local confirmed cases and 31,720 asymptomatic carriers on Wednesday, according to the commission.

On Wednesday, several districts in Guangzhou, Guangdong province, which had been reporting the bulk of new infections nationally, announced they were removing temporary restrictions imposed on certain areas and would only lock down areas deemed as high risk.

Zhang Yi, deputy director of the city's health commission, said during a news conference that close contacts of confirmed cases will be allowed to quarantine at home, instead of in a centralized facility, if home-based isolation requirements are met.

> "The diminished virulence of Omicron results from the changing nature of the virus, as well as expanding immunization across the population and timely provision of treatment."
>
> **Chang Zhaorui,** researcher with the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention

Li Pan, a health official in Chongqing in Southwest China, said on Wednesday that close contacts who are elderly, pregnant or breastfeeding and those with serious underlying illnesses can apply to isolate at home. But they should ensure a separate room and avoid contact with remaining family members.

The city government clarified that the scope of close contacts should not be arbitrarily expanded, and "space-time companions" — a term describing people whose movement likely overlapped with confirmed patients — should not be recklessly identified as close contacts.

Starting on Wednesday, the municipality of Beijing will no longer require seniors who rarely leave home, residents who work from home, students taking lessons online, infants and people who don't plan to engage in social activities to take regular nucleic acid tests.

Service resumed

People take Metro Line 1 in Hohhot, Inner Mongolia autonomous region, on Thursday. The city reopened all its 44 metro stations and some bus routes as epidemic controls eased.
LIU WENHUA / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

Extreme lengths

A resident lowers a rope from his window to pick up a delivery in Beijing's Chaoyang district on Wednesday. Beijing added 2,126 new infections from midnight to 3 pm on Thursday, including 155 found at the community level. LYU FENG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Experts call for attention on COVID anxiety, treatment

By WANG XIAOYU
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Putting down the mobile phone, talking about negative feelings with friends or seeking professional counseling are some of the methods helpful in tackling depression and anxiety during a COVID-19 outbreak, experts said.

As the virus continues to circulate and lockdowns trigger mental stress, experts have called for greater investment in mental health services nationwide.

The World Health Organization said in March that the prevalence of anxiety and depression around the world increased by 25 percent in the first year of the pandemic alone.

Lu Lin, an academician with the Chinese Academy of Sciences and president of Peking University Sixth Hospital, said at a forum last month that China is no exception to the global trend.

From March 2020 to March 2021, the prevalence of depression and insomnia in China had risen, and repeated COVID-19 outbreaks, quarantine requirements and the high risk of exposure to the virus could all contribute to worsening people's mental conditions, according to data shared by Lu during the event.

In an interview with People's Daily, Lu said that misinformation circulated online had also magnified people's sense of panic.

The public should pay closer attention to information released by authoritative outlets, he suggested. People should also reduce the amount of time they spend in front of screens and instead chat with friends or family, listen to music or exercise to relax.

"It is normal to experience emotional swings or uncomfortable feelings, such as insomnia, lack of appetite, memory loss and being easily agitated, during this time," he said.

"Most of these conditions can be assuaged by self-adjustment," Lu said. "If necessary, it is suggested to seek online psychological consultation by dialing hotlines published by government departments and hospitals or visiting mental health clinics."

Xi Yingjun, from the Beijing Anding Hospital affiliated to Capital Medical University, said that since the start of the pandemic, the number of people reporting mental health issues had significantly increased.

"As the pandemic and resulting difficulties in people's lives exert a negative influence on mental health, governments should survey people, evaluate the practical needs of the public and formulate policies to address their concerns accordingly," he said.

Social organizations can be mobilized to provide assistance for those in need, such as helping them buy groceries and medicines, Xi said. Some mental health clinics have also been advised by Xi to launch hotlines and guide individuals in need to seek help.

Authorities have ramped up mental health services in parallel with the fight against the disease.

According to the three guidelines released by the National Health Commission on Nov 19, officials are required to relay the numbers of psychological assistance hotlines to residents in high-risk areas, as well as people undergoing home quarantine or health monitoring, so as to help relieve their anxiety and prevent incidents.

When they are found to experience mental issues, community workers should introduce them to mental health institutions promptly.

Hotline soothes worried residents

By ZHENG CAIXIONG in Guangzhou
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A psychological counseling hotline that opened to the public in 2020 has played a special role in offering support to residents in Guangzhou, Guangdong province, as they've struggled with the uncertainties brought by COVID-19 and sudden lockdowns.

Yuan Jie, a specially appointed researcher at South China Normal University's School of Psychology, said the hotline he helped to establish has provided much-needed psychological support to residents worried about the pandemic.

He added that it had contributed to reassuring anxious residents and helped to ensure and create a good and stable social environment for the prevention and control of the virus.

The majority of people who phone the hotline for help are students, patients, office workers, laid-off workers and other residents who have faced difficulties and pressures related to COVID-19, said Yuan.

The volunteers answering calls on the hotline, whose numbers have reached as many as 200, include senior psychologists, psychology teachers from local universities and high schools, and psychology students.

They are an indispensable force in helping to win the battle against COVID-19 in the southern metropolis, said Yuan.

Yuan, who won the award of "The Most Beautiful Teacher Who Moved Guangzhou in 2022", said he and his colleagues are always patient and seek to calm callers who are particularly distressed.

He added that each half-day shift he volunteers on the hotline usually involves around 10 calls, with each lasting for around 30 minutes.

Lai Yongmei, a volunteer who joined the hotline in September, said she had so far completed more than 40 cases of psychological counseling on the hotline.

After having worked for the hotline for more than two months, Lai said: "When answering a call for help, we not only pay attention to the feelings of the callers, but also try to understand what has caused such feelings. And we not only sympathize with the callers, but also think from a professional and rational perspective."

Liu Yiling, a second-year postgraduate from the School of Psychology at South China Normal University who joined the hotline in April, said she had been moved when some of the callers phoned her again a few days later to express their gratitude for her patience and help.

Guan Suxin contributed this story.

Businesses reopen as Guangzhou eases controls

By LI WENFANG
and ZHENG ERQI in Guangzhou

Li Qunxin, who had suspended service at her small restaurant in Tianhe district in Guangzhou, Guangdong province, for a week, has happily opened her doors again.

Dine-in service at restaurants in low-risk areas in Haizhu, Liwan, Conghua, Panyu, Tianhe, Yuexiu and Huangpu districts in Guangzhou was allowed to resume starting on Wednesday or Thursday as COVID-19 controls were relaxed.

"I'm certainly happy. I have to pay the rent and workers' wages even when business is suspended," she said.

Chen Jianliang, who had lunch at Li's restaurant on Thursday, said it was good the ban had been lifted. "As long as you take care of personal protection, it's fine," he said.

Zhang Zhehao, another diner, said he was a little afraid to see many people dining together, although dine-in service is much more convenient.

Canadian coffee chain Tim Hortons has reopened the majority of its stores in Guangzhou for dine-in service as well.

"We see robust demand for our coffee and food. With both dine-in and take-away services, business is expected to recover very quickly," said Li Yihui, Tim Hortons' South China operations general manager.

Indoor entertainment and service venues such as cinemas, gyms and libraries in low-risk areas in some districts have also reopened.

Primary, middle schools and kindergartens in low-risk areas in Liwan district have been given the green-light to resume in-person classes.

Closed-off management measures, which were temporarily implemented across Guangzhou, were lifted on Wednesday afternoon after a decision to pursue more scientific and precise COVID-19 control measures.

Upon the lifting of the measures on Wednesday, online searches for train tickets leaving Guangzhou surged 250 percent on travel agency Qunar, with the main destinations being Sichuan, Hunan and Guizhou provinces.

Tongcheng Travel, another travel portal, saw a 400 percent surge in searches for tickets for flights from Guangzhou at around 3 pm on Wednesday, compared with the volume at the same time the day before.

People have lunch at a restaurant in Guangzhou's Tianhe district on Thursday, as dine-in services resume in low-risk areas. ZHENG ERQI / CHINA DAILY

The latest measures from the Guangzhou authorities are in line with the 20 adjusted COVID-19 control measures issued recently by the State Council's Joint Prevention and Control Mechanism. They aim to minimize the impact on risk-free people, said Cheng Chaogong, chief researcher with Tongcheng Travel.

They also retain strict management according to the country's ninth COVID-19 control protocol, which allows risk-free people to resume their normal lives and work in a safe and orderly manner.

The latest steps will have a positive impact on the orderly resumption of business and leisure travel and serve as a model for other cities, Cheng said.

Liao Caijuan and Dou Xiaomei, managers at two pharmacies in Tianhe district, have both seen an increase in customers looking for medicines for flu and respiratory symptoms as a preventive measure in the past two days.

"With this opening up, they are buying these medicines beforehand, just in case," Dou said.

Guangzhou reported 683 new local COVID-19 confirmed cases and 5,629 new local asymptomatic carriers on Wednesday.

Zhu Wenqian contributed to this story. Contact the writers at liwenfang@chinadaily.com.cn

CHINA

Social anxiety rising among young people

Many say they lack the requisite skills to cope with work and community life

By ZOU SHUO
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A new college graduate's decision to become a cemetery custodian has ignited a heated discussion on social media about how young people nowadays can deal with social anxiety and benefit from genuine interpersonal relationships.

The Generation Z student from Chongqing said she is very pleased with her job because she only has four colleagues and does not need to worry about any complicated relationships.

Moreover, her office, dormitory and canteen are in the same building, the pace of work is slow and she almost feels as if she has retired early.

Her decision became a trending topic on Sina Weibo, with many netizens saying they envied her position.

"Young people would rather work in a cemetery than network," said one comment, which received more than 10,000 likes.

Meanwhile, a 29-year-old man in Shenzhen, Guangdong province, made headlines after he called for emergency assistance twice in a month because he was experiencing social anxiety.

The man, surnamed Zhong, has a doctorate. He was diagnosed with a panic disorder when he began work and had difficulty adjusting to the pressure of his job and his new social circle. He also experienced two relationship breakups.

Previously, he had lived an isolated life and had not participated in social gatherings.

According to a survey conducted last year by China Youth Daily, more than 80 percent of the nearly 5,000 college students questioned said they had mild social anxiety disorder, with only 12 percent saying they did not have any problems.

The survey found that the disorder surfaces most frequently when speaking in front of large groups, communicating with strangers and asking for favors. One-third of the students said they would pretend not to notice acquaintances when passing them on the street.

Cheng Qiang, 29, who works for a media group in Beijing said he has experienced social anxiety disorder since middle school.

He said he always wears a face mask in the office to try to avoid contact with coworkers. He also chooses the long route whenever he goes to the toilet or kitchen so he will encounter fewer people.

"The disorder becomes more severe when I am around people who know me but are not close," he said. "Their attention makes me nervous, and I don't know how to respond."

Chen Mo, 29, a doctoral candidate at a university in Beijing, said she avoids talking to other people over the phone or in person because her voice is soft and she feels it does not sound professional enough.

"I would much rather text as I can use a meme to end a conversation or avoid awkwardness," she said. "I am more comfortable and seem more positive when texting, and it takes much more energy and mental strength to be as positive when talking in person."

Wang Wenda, a psychology lecturer at Ningxia University's Xinhua College in Yinchuan, capital of the Ningxia Hui autonomous region, said people tend to have social anxiety disorder if they are introverted or lack confidence or social skills such as those required to communicate with others, deal with conflict or find the strength to say no.

Others experience the disorder because they have suffered traumatic interpersonal relationships, he said.

The disorder is not trivial. Severe social anxiety can lead to panic attacks and trigger other psychological problems as a result of a lack of contact with other people, Wang said.

Some people are very socially active online but timid in real life because face-to-face communication requires more social skills than texting, he added.

"Instant messaging apps are not really 'instant' because people can choose not to respond to messages or can take time to come up with the best response, while in real life, they must react right away and understand different facial expressions and gestures," he noted.

He suggested that people with social anxiety disorder should go out and expose themselves to more social gatherings and practice their social skills, adding that through greater social experience and small successes in social encounters, they will reap the benefits of a real social life and come to enjoy positive interpersonal relations.

Li Shihong (left) chats with relatives and friends at his cafe in Xinglong, Wanning, Hainan province, last month. CHEN ZIWEI / XINHUA

Coffee aroma evokes fond memories

Mixing condensed milk and charcoal-roasted coffee, barista Li Shihong prepares a classic Indonesian coffee milk, with the aroma of the hot beverage permeating the room.

Because it brings back memories of life abroad, this flavored coffee is particularly popular among local overseas Chinese who returned from Indonesia.

Li, 51, lives in Xinglong township, Wanning, a coastal city in the tropical island province of Hainan in South China. He has been running a cafe in the town with his wife, Shen Hongmei, for two decades.

Both Li and Shen are descendants of returned overseas Chinese. Li's mother returned from Indonesia, while Shen's mother came back from Thailand.

Since the 1950s, overseas Chinese from countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia, Vietnam, Thailand and Japan have returned and settled in Xinglong.

Those who returned from Southeast Asian nations brought back the habit of drinking coffee. "Everyone here drinks coffee, and the production process of local coffee is relatively extensive. We wanted to improve the quality of Xinglong coffee and enrich the taste, so we opened our own coffee shop," Shen said.

The cafe enjoys a good reputation among the locals, and the couple's relatives and friends often gather there to chat about the good old days. The couple have heard a lot of interesting stories about their ancestors from their uncles, Lin Shihe and Chen Defu.

Lin, 81, was born on Bangka Island, Indonesia. When he arrived in Xinglong in 1960, he was assigned to work at a local farm. He later studied medicine in Beijing, and eventually, he became a general surgeon. He was the dean of a hospital in Xinglong when he retired.

Uncle Chen is 79. He lived in Indonesia until he was 10, when he returned to China with his mother, who carried along all her dowry goods, including bronze pastry molds.

At that time, every overseas Chinese family would make their own pastries. Influenced by the food culture of the returned Chinese, the Xinglong natives used to borrow the molds to make Indonesian-style pastries during festivals.

"Even my mom would lose track of where the molds were. People took turns to use them," Chen recalled. Since then, a pastry featuring a seven-layered cake has flourished and become a local specialty that is served in the coffee shop.

Li often asked his uncles to describe the distinctive characteristics of Xinglong's local culture involving the returned Chinese.

The reply was simple: "Be tolerant, motivated, assiduous and positive. We were warmly accepted by the locals, therefore we extend the same courtesy to everyone."

Even though business is booming, Li and his wife have no plans to open other cafes outside of town.

"The culture of overseas Chinese is the soul of our coffee shop. Without the soul, the cafe would not be as prosperous as it is now," Li said.

XINHUA

CHINA

Editor's Note: *The highly anticipated second phase of the 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity will soon start in Montreal, Canada. What should you expect? And what's China's role in the COP15 presidency? Erik Nilsson, a senior reporter at China Daily, spoke with Huang Runqiu, COP15 president and China's minister of ecology and environment, about the upcoming conference and more. Here are the excerpts:*

COP15 president lauds progress, looks ahead

Huang Runqiu discusses China's biodiversity achievements, need for global cooperation

This year marks the 30th anniversary of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). In your view, why is biodiversity conservation important? And what challenges does the world face in this respect?

As a Chinese saying goes, "All beings flourish when they live in harmony and receive nourishment from nature." Biodiversity lays the foundation for human survival and development. Our clothing, food, shelter, means of travel — every aspect of our material and cultural lives — are closely related to biodiversity.

Data show that about half of global GDP is related to biodiversity. Over 3 billion livelihoods depend on marine and coastal biodiversity. Over 1.6 billion livelihoods depend on forests and non-lumber forest products. And about 70 percent of people living in poverty depend on activities such as agriculture, fishing and forestry. As for healthcare, 70 percent of cancer drugs are natural products or originate from chemical compounds found in natural products.

In addition, biodiversity plays an important role in maintaining the natural ecological balance — for instance, by purifying the environment, preventing or mediating natural disasters, safeguarding food security and protecting human health.

Over the years, the international community has become fully aware that biodiversity is of the utmost importance and has acted to protect it. However, the global biodiversity crisis is worsening.

Due to human activity, 75 percent of the terrestrial environment and 66 percent of the marine environment have been significantly altered. In addition, more than 85 percent of wetlands have been lost, and about one-fourth of species face the threat of extinction, according to a report published by the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystems Services in May 2019. The International Union for Conservation of Nature said in a 2020 report that 41 percent of amphibians, 26 percent of mammals and 14 percent of birds are threatened with extinction.

In the face of global biodiversity loss, we humans have a shared future, and no country, organization or individual can remain apart.

Last year, President Xi Jinping delivered a keynote speech at the leaders' summit of the first phase of the COP15. He said that the international community must enhance cooperation, build consensus and pool strength to build a community of all life on Earth.

Therefore, the international community should work together to advance biodiversity protection, champion harmonious coexistence between humans and nature, respect, adapt to and protect nature, promote global cooperation in biodiversity protection and uphold multilateralism and the principle of equal consultation. Only in this way can we pool strength to protect biodiversity, achieve win-win results and build a better home together.

LI MIN / CHINA DAILY

Global biodiversity loss is accelerating, and this is a challenge for all humankind. What achievements has China made in recent years in this respect?

We have made clear progress in conserving biodiversity and have earned international acclaim.

For instance, the population of wild giant pandas has increased from 1,114 to 1,864. Their classification has been downgraded from "endangered" to "vulnerable".

Yangtze finless porpoises now frequently appear in different sections of the Yangtze River. Snow leopards have been frequently spotted in the Sanjiangyuan National Park. Marbled cats, which had not been seen for more than 30 years, have reappeared in the Gaoligong Mountains in Yunnan province.

The wild population of Hainan black-crested gibbons has increased from fewer than 10 in two groups 40 years ago, to 36 in five groups. The crested ibis population has increased from only seven in 1981 to over 5,000, and the population of Tibetan antelopes has grown from 70,000 during the 1980s-1990s to more than 300,000.

In our view, this progress can be attributed to several factors.

First, we have increased efforts at the administrative level. We have elevated biodiversity protection to a national strategy in China. We have drafted or revised a series of relevant laws and regulations, included biodiversity conservation in development plans for governments at the central and local levels and have actively pushed for mainstream protection.

Over the past decade, China has drafted and revised 20 laws and regulations pertinent to biodiversity conservation, including laws on forestry, grasslands, fisheries, wild animals, the environment, seeds, wetlands, the Yangtze River and biosecurity.

We have also rolled out the Opinions on Further Strengthening the Protection of Biological Diversity and have implemented the China National Biodiversity Conservation Strategy and Action Plan (2011-30).

Minister of Ecology and Environment Huang Runqiu talks with Erik Nilsson in his office in Beijing. JIANG DONG / CHINA DAILY

Second, we have established a system of protected areas with a focus on national parks. To date, China has established its first five national parks, nearly 200 botanical gardens and 250 wildlife rehabilitation and breeding centers. It has created nearly 10,000 protected areas of all types and at all levels, accounting for about 18 percent of its surface area. In this respect, we have achieved the 17 percent mandated by the Aichi Target 11 ahead of time.

China has also set up a relatively complete ex situ conservation system, including botanical gardens, germ plasm-resource centers, gene banks and wildlife rehabilitation and breeding centers.

Third, we have strengthened the conservation and restoration of natural spaces. We have taken the initiative to draw ecological conservation red lines nationwide, which is an innovation, globally.

The red lines cover zones that are critical to environmental function or are ecologically sensitive, and stringent protection is enforced in those areas. They account for 31.7 percent of China's total land area and protect nearly 40 percent of the water-source conservation and flood-regulation resources, 32 percent of those used to fend off sandstorms, and 45 percent of those designated for carbon storage. Our forest coverage and forest reserves have both maintained growth over the last 30 years.

Fourth, we have raised public awareness and encouraged social participation. We have encouraged the involvement of various parties, facilitated ways for them to participate and improved incentive mechanisms.

On important occasions, such as the International Day for Biological Diversity and World Environment Day, events are held to promote public awareness of biodiversity. Public awareness and participation are continuing to grow, and an atmosphere in which everyone works to promote biodiversity conservation is gradually taking shape.

What is China doing to implement its plans?

China plans to make efforts in multiple fields. The first is to improve policies and regulations on biodiversity.

We will update the China National Biodiversity Conservation Strategy and Action Plan (2011-30) and improve the policy and system guarantees.

We will actively study and plan for special legislation on biodiversity and make the legal system for biodiversity conservation more systematic and complete.

We will enact solution-based laws in areas such as nature reserves and improve corresponding supervisory systems.

We will also strictly implement the Biosecurity Law, strengthen the environmental safety management of biotechnologies and continue to improve the prevention and control of invasive species.

Second, we will continue to optimize the biodiversity conservation network and promote the systematic restoration of environments.

We will continue to implement major projects for biodiversity conservation, step up the construction of a system of protected areas with national parks as the mainstay, strengthen the protection and supervision of key areas and improve the ex situ conservation system for rare and endangered animals and plants.

We will also focus on building a complete biodiversity-protection monitoring system, continue to carry out biodiversity background surveys, observation and evaluations, improve the technical standard system related to biodiversity surveying and monitoring and explore ways to establish technical systems for biodiversity evaluation and for protection effectiveness assessment.

Third, we will strengthen the sustainable use of biodiversity.

Without good and sustainable use, it is difficult to achieve effective conservation. Therefore, we will build a whole-process, whole-chain and regular biodiversity protection and supervision mechanism and crack down on the illegal use of biological resources.

We will strengthen technical research on the development and sustainable use of biological resources, oversee and regulate biodiversity-friendly business activities, promote the development of green industries and franchising, and create a high-quality, diversified ecological product system.

Fourth, we will also deepen international cooperation and exchange.

We will incorporate the topic of biodiversity conservation into high-level international exchange, promote international cooperation on the issue at high levels, actively participate in global biodiversity governance, honor the CBD and other international conventions, strengthen communication, enhance partnership recognition and promote global multilateral environmental governance according to our stated national concept of building a shared future for all life on Earth.

Last but not least, we will encourage public involvement. We need to be innovative in terms of popularization and education and enhance public awareness of and attention to biodiversity through understanding the concept of biodiversity.

The second phase of COP15, to be held in Montreal, will define and adopt the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework. Could you describe the consultation process, the results so far and the positive role that China has played during its presidency?

The main task of COP15's second phase is to draw upon past experience in the development and implementation of previous global targets on biodiversity to formulate the post-2020 GBF. The aim is to put global biodiversity on a path to recovery by 2030 — that is, to end the current situation of biodiversity loss.

It can be said that the framework is a guiding political document on global biodiversity governance. There are also high hopes for its adoption during the meeting.

Currently, the structure and core content of the post-2020 framework has been agreed upon, laying a solid foundation for finalizing a solution that is acceptable to all concerned parties.

There is much work to be done to ensure that the targets set by the framework are realistic yet ambitious, practical and balanced, and that they help promote the sustainable recovery of biodiversity.

In addition, the framework's realization ultimately depends on its implementation mechanism.

For developing countries, the biggest concern is the mobilization of funds. Funding is obviously very important. It's an important and difficult part of the negotiations.

Since assuming the COP15 presidency, China has exercised leadership and coordination in its efforts to advance negotiations for the post-2020 GBF.

So far, China has convened 37 COP15 meetings of the presidium. It has also presided over four meetings of the open-ended working group on the post-2020 GBF in Geneva and Nairobi, among other locations, in collaboration with the CBD secretariat.

China has made significant efforts to advance framework negotiations. Frequent meetings, especially presidium meetings, are quite rare in the process of multilateral environmental negotiations.

Moreover, China has made use of gatherings such as the UN High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, the G20 Joint Environment and Climate Ministerial Meeting, the high-level week of the 77th session of the UN General Assembly, and COP27, to organize exchanges on key COP15 issues.

These efforts have both maintained the political momentum of COP15 and facilitated the bridging of differences among contracting parties to achieve greater consensus.

Although there are still many difficulties and demands, all parties have expressed their firm political support and confidence in the negotiation process and in China's role in the COP15 presidency.

I am confident the international community will respond positively to the spirit of community embodied in the theme of the upcoming conference "Ecological Civilization: Building a Shared Future for All Life on Earth" and demonstrate the wisdom and courage to overcome these difficulties and differences.

During the second phase of COP15, China will continue to perform its presidency well. With the support of the CBD secretariat, the presidium and the host country, China will work with fellow contracting parties, international organizations and stakeholders and spare no effort in advancing the negotiation process, building the broadest possible consensus in the international community, promoting the adoption of the framework and ensuring the second phase of COP15 in Montreal is successful.

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COMMENT

Editorials

Meeting reinforces China-EU cooperation crucial to safeguarding European interests

President Xi Jinping's appeal that the European Union strengthen macroeconomic policy coordination with China and jointly foster new growth engines should have made visiting European Council President Charles Michel fully realize how much the two sides can accomplish were it not for the institutional obstacles that the EU has put in the way of cooperation.

Michel's acknowledgement that China does not seek expansion and is an important partner in upholding the purposes of the UN Charter and supporting multilateralism is an objective statement on China that has long been absent from the bloc's China discourse. And it is particularly good to hear that he confirmed to the Chinese leader the EU's readiness to work with China to push forward implementation of the EU-China investment treaty. This hard-earned pact that the two sides finally agreed on after years of hard negotiations was frozen by EU legislature before its final authorization due to the interference of the United States.

Since Angela Merkel, a key supporter of multilateralism and the EU's independence, retired as German chancellor late last year, the EU has subjected itself to the US influencing its China policy. However, the shocks the EU has received from doing the US' bidding should have made clear to the bloc the fact that the shared values that the US talks of are nothing but shackles intended to bind countries closer to it.

As Xi urged, China and the EU should work together to ensure the security, stability and reliability of industrial and supply chains, oppose "decoupling and chain breaking" and protectionism, and oppose politicizing and weaponizing trade, scientific and technological exchanges. The EU should rest assured that China will always remain open to European companies. Reciprocally, China hopes that the EU can provide a fair and transparent business environment for Chinese companies as well.

It can be said that to ensure the stability of China-EU economic cooperation is an effective way to protect Europe's interests in the volatile world. Something the EU has no reasons not to do together with China. The way the meeting between Xi and Michel unfolded in Beijing on Thursday was exactly the opposite of what the China-bashers expected. Both the host and guest focused on the broad common interests between China and the EU and great potential of cooperation.

In enabling him to gain first-hand knowledge of China's clearly-defined strategic intentions, Michel's visit should help the EU recalibrate its China policy in a way that allows for greater mutually beneficial cooperation.

The differences between the two sides are by no means justifications for estrangement and decoupling, but rather reasons for more effective communication.

Underlying defect of US' all-fronts competition

"We are pushing on all fronts, all at once," United States Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo said of her country's ongoing efforts to outcompete China in a speech at MIT on Wednesday. "And we need to do it all together."

While the Joe Biden administration is making "whole-of-government" endeavors for that purpose, Raimondo called for closer, broader engagement, with the private sector and US allies and partners, because "competing effectively with China isn't going to be easy". Neither is decoupling. So the US is not seeking to decouple its economy from that of China's in any way, Raimondo said.

Instead, as has been reiterated repeatedly by others, from President Joe Biden to Secretary of State Antony Blinken, the US administration seeks to collaborate with China on such key global concerns as climate change and public health.

Although there hardly is anything new in the US Commerce Secretary's remarks — which were typical of the present US administration regarding China — she did display precious awareness of the self-defeating nature of the "decoupling" rhetoric. Keeping that in perspective will prove of great significance to the repositioning of the US' China policies.

A core problem hindering any improvement in China-US economic and trade ties has been the one-sided, thus unfair, emphasis on the "losses" the US side has suffered — mostly job losses and its trade deficit — and total disregard of the far greater corresponding benefits.

The US commerce chief made an important point in observing that bilateral trade, which stands at $750 billion today, "provides revenues for American companies, jobs for American workers, and connectivity with the Chinese people".

In her own words, "China is now our third-largest export market, and those exports directly support 750,000 American jobs. China is also the US' largest agricultural market and our farmers are on track to export $36 billion in agricultural goods this year to China".

A confrontational US approach to competition with China, as the "China hawks" in the US Congress insist on, therefore, hurts their country just as badly as it does China. Only this doesn't seem to affect the now bipartisan Congressional consensus on confronting China, which was obvious in Raimondo's speech as well. The current US approach to relations with China has an underlying defect because it is based on some biased perceptions of the overall relationship, especially when it comes to judgments about Chinese intentions.

In Raimondo's remarks, for instance, was the claim that it was China, rather than the US, that is "decoupling economically in a number of areas". This is a conspicuous misjudgment because now and in the past Beijing has been keen on developing close economic interdependence with all the world's major economies. That is why Beijing has been among the most vocal opponents of de-globalization.

In spite of all their differences, from those in political systems to those in governance philosophies and practices, the Chinese commitment to multilateralism is an important guarantee for the convergence of Chinese and US interests. Exploiting it is in both countries' interests.

UK shooting itself in the foot politicizing deal

Rishi Sunak, the UK prime minister, is going in a direction in which concern for geopolitics takes precedence over everything when he said that the "golden era" of UK-China ties was over. In other words, he has obviously let a Cold War mentality dictate economic relations with China.

The announcement on Monday that the UK government would invest £700 million ($839 million) for a 50 percent stake in the nuclear plant, known as Sizewell C, means that Chinese investment in the project will be squeezed out since the other 50 percent investment will come from EDF, the French state utility, which will construct the plant.

There are a number of nuclear infrastructure projects in the United Kingdom, in which France, China and the UK have been cooperating on the basis of mutual benefits and also for the construction of safe and advanced nuclear stations to quench UK's thirst for power and reduce its reliance on gas.

It is reported that the UK government will pay Chinese State-owned power group China General Nuclear over £100 million for it to exit the £20 billion Sizewell C nuclear energy project.

If Chinese parties are forced to withdraw from all nuclear projects in the UK, the money the UK government is to pay for its violation of the contracts will be a lot. In addition to the money it will have to raise for the gap left over by the exit of Chinese parties, the UK government is making things very difficult for itself unnecessarily.

Furthermore, by unilaterally breaking contracts it has signed with China, the UK government is not only politicizing economic affairs but also sabotaging its own reputation.

By decoupling with China in terms of economic cooperation, the UK is setting a bad example in observing the norms in international relations and doing a disservice to the maintenance of sound global industry and supply chains.

The hostilities between Russia and Ukraine have triggered a fundamental rethink in European countries on foreign-controlled energy infrastructure. But the UK's move is not about protecting its energy infrastructure and strengthening its energy security. Rather, it is using that as a justification for politicizing and essentially weaponizing the energy deal.

Chinese leaders have reiterated on different occasions about its peaceful rise, and that it pursues economic cooperation with all countries on the basis of equality and mutual benefits.

Those countries, which choose to unilaterally decouple with China economically and politically simply because they still harbor a Cold War mentality and politicize economic affairs, will only shoot themselves in the foot.

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Luo Jie

Opinion Line

Listen to people's voice on Sino-Japanese ties

A public opinion survey on China-Japan relations, conducted by the China International Communications Group and Japanese think tank Genron NPO, and released on Wednesday, shows there is a broad consensus among Chinese respondents on the importance of China-Japan relations. According to the poll, the 18th of its kind conducted since 2005, 71.3 percent of Chinese respondents consider Sino-Japanese relations "important" or "relatively important".

They particularly recognized the important role economic factors play in ties between the two countries. At least 77.4 percent of Chinese respondents said they believe China-Japan economic cooperation is still important to China's future, up 2 percentage points from 2021, 75.2 percent believed bilateral ties have "strong complementarity that can realize win-win cooperation", up 3.6 percentage points from 2021, and 70.3 percent believed the total trade volume between the two countries will continue to increase.

Chinese respondents also believe that the development of bilateral relations over the past 50 years has not met expectations and that efforts should be made to strengthen China-Japan cooperation with the theme of peaceful development. They felt historical issues, territorial disputes and Japan-United States alliance are factors affecting Chinese respondents' perception of Sino-Japanese relations.

The 50th anniversary of normalization of diplomatic ties between China and Japan should offer the two countries an opportunity to tide over adverse factors and difficulties and improve bilateral relations. Despite historical issues and territorial disputes, Chinese respondents still have high expectations for the two countries to carry out cooperation in various fields and jointly deal with global issues.

Also, the US has proved to be the largest external factor affecting the China-Japan relations over the past year, but 71.3 percent of Chinese respondents believe the two neighbors should make greater efforts to reduce the impact of the Sino-US games on their ties.

China and Japan have not only close geographical proximity and close cultural ties, but are also important members of the international community that should shoulder shared responsibilities on many regional and international issues. China-Japan relations are not destined to be smooth sailing, but as long as the two countries learn from history, follow the call of the times and their people, and firmly adhere to the right direction of peace, friendship and cooperation, they will certainly create a bright future for bilateral ties in the new era.

— THEPAPER.CN

Cannot lower the guard against AIDS

Thursday marks the 35th World AIDS Day. It's been 41 years since the deadliest epidemic known to mankind was detected. According to World Health Organization data, in 2021 the human immunodeficiency virus infected 1.5 million people and 650,000 people died after contracting AIDS globally; that is almost one death per minute. The total number of AIDS patients reached 38.4 million by the end of last year.

Compared to its share of the global population, the percentage of infections in China is quite low. In 2021, China reported 60,154 new AIDS cases and 19,623 deaths, very low when compared to the numbers elsewhere in the world. It is fair to say that China has managed to control this epidemic well, as it has done with other major epidemics.

That kind of control would not have been possible without various departments taking adequate measures, of which mention must be made of effective control of drug abuse. Unlike certain Western countries that are often legalizing the use of certain drugs, such as cannabis, in China there is a ban on the use of narcotic substances. Stopping people from taking drugs in China has helped cut a major source of AIDS.

Also, in the past 20 years, a program of cutting mother-child infection alone has saved 16,000 babies from getting infected with HIV. Now, AIDS patients can have children that are not born infected.

However, one cannot lower the guard with regard to a disease that has claimed 19,623 lives in China in 2021 alone. More importantly, according to the National Health Commission, 3,000 more infections among those aged 15-24 years are reported every year; the number of elderly patients is also rising.

It is necessary to improve sex education to control AIDS. Youngsters need to be taught about having protected sex. It won't be possible to prevent this deadly disease unless everyone takes proper measures.

— ZHANG ZHOUXIANG, CHINA DAILY

What They Say

Washington seeking to spoil neighbors' detente

The concerns China has expressed on Wednesday over the 18th India-US joint military exercise "Yudh Abhyas" that started one day earlier in Uttarakhand, India, just 100 kilometers from the Line of Actual Control, is fully justified.

The exercise violates the spirit of the two border agreements signed between New Delhi and Beijing in 1993 and 1996, and is detrimental to the trust between the two countries.

Although Washington and New Delhi claimed the nearly two-week military exercise aims to "enhance interoperability and share expertise between both armies in peacekeeping and disaster relief operations", it is no secret that the United States is taking advantage of it to try and sow discord between China and India.

The US has no immediate national interests in the hinterland of Asia. Any inputs there serve geopolitical purposes — playing India, the world's largest democracy, as it is referred to in the US' alliance discourse, against Russia on the Ukraine conflict and the energy trade, and against China on the border dispute.

In that sense, the claimed purpose of the exercise for "peacekeeping and disaster relief operations" is only a disguise — the US was absent from all disaster relief efforts in Pakistan, Nepal and Afghanistan after these countries were hit hard by earthquakes and floods in recent years. Not to mention the humanitarian disaster Afghanistan is experiencing now was an immediate result of the US' failed democracy experiment in the country over the past 20 years that was started by an invasion by the US and its allies.

Fully aware of the ugly role the US is playing with the exercise, China expressing "concern" toward the joint drills can only be described as reasonably reserved. This is because it does not want to jeopardize the positive, though delicate, momentum of the improvement of ties with India.

Despite the US' continuous attempts to rub salt on India's wounds over the incident, there has been a reconciliation between China and India to some extent after the border clash between Chinese and Indian troops in June 2020 dealt a heavy blow to their relations.

The extent to which Washington has tried to coerce India to join the US' sanctions on Russia over the Ukraine crisis, which it resisted, should serve to show New Delhi that the US is only trying to draw it into its geopolitical games.

It is a consensus of the two neighbors that their border dispute, a problem created and left behind by the British colonialists on purpose, should not influence the overall stability of their relations. The border issue should be resolved through dialogue without any interference from any external parties.

And keeping stable relations with China and Russia does not conflict with India's ties with the US. Being able to balance well among major countries is conducive to India playing an increasingly important and unique role on the world stage.

— LI YANG, CHINA DAILY

VIEWS

Xie Yu

DPP defeat shows desire for peace

The ruling Democratic Progressive Party suffered a heavy defeat in Taiwan's local elections on Saturday. Of the 21 county and city chief positions contested, the opposition Kuomintang won 13, the DPP won five, the Taiwan People's Party won one, and the remaining two went to independent candidates, according to the island's election affairs authority.

Geographically, the DPP wins were confined to the south of the island. The DPP won Tainan, Kaohsiung, Chiayi, Pingtung, and Penghu, which together account for approximately one-fourth of the island's population.

The causes for the DPP's poor showing are its poor handling of the COVID-19 pandemic, public anger at its cronyism and fielding candidates who have been accused of plagiarism in their academic theses. The constant scandals have led to the bankruptcy of the DPP's credibility, and the accumulation of public grievances has eroded its support. The election results reflect Taiwan residents' growing dissatisfaction with the administration of Tsai Ing-wen.

The DPP election campaign focused on the confrontational stance it has adopted toward the mainland, which failed to gain traction with voters who are more concerned about peace, stability and better livelihoods.

> **The election results have once again proved that most Taiwan residents are not interested in cross-Straits confrontation. They want peace and stability and better lives.**

With the DPP trailing in the polls before the vote, Taiwan leader Tsai Ing-wen began aggressively promoting "defending Taiwan against the mainland" during the campaigning, although the local elections traditionally pay more attention to the qualities of the candidates and local livelihood issues.

After the Ukraine crisis, Tsai stepped up her efforts to lean on the United States for support in her confrontational approach toward the mainland, straining cross-Straits tensions. With the DPP repeatedly buying weapons from the US, this sparked anxiety among Taiwan residents about a potential military conflict across the Taiwan Straits, especially after US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi visited Taiwan in August and the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee passed the Taiwan Policy Act of 2022 in September.

The election results have once again proved that most Taiwan residents are not interested in cross-Straits confrontation. They want peace and stability and better lives.

Tsai resigned as head of the DPP late on Saturday, as she was forced to take responsibility for her party's poor performance in the elections. She is set to be a lame-duck leader for the rest of her term, which will be her last as she cannot stand for leadership in the next election having completed two terms. The DPP will soon be entering the "post-Tsai era".

The KMT fared well in the local elections mainly because former Kaohsiung mayor and KMT politician Han Kuo-yu set a really good base four years ago. The party won two-thirds of the county and city chief positions in the 2018 local elections. Tapping the simmering discontent against the ruling DPP, the KMT has surely consolidated its position in the local elections. But the KMT's strong performance in the local elections doesn't mean it will necessarily seize power in 2024.

After all, these were local elections. Cross-Straits ties will have a bigger say in the island's 2024 leadership election. A vote against the DPP in these local elections cannot be construed as a vote of confidence in the KMT. The DPP's poor performance in the local elections could even prompt it to push its "defending Taiwan against the mainland" strategy even harder as a gamble to win the leadership election two years later.

However, "Taiwan independence" has no future. Regardless of the outcome of the 2024 leadership election, only cross-Straits reunification can guarantee peace and stability and the long-term well-being of Taiwan residents.

The author is director of the Center for Taiwan-Related Affairs Studies, China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations.
The views don't necessarily represent those of China Daily.

JIN DING / CHINA DAILY

Jia Ruixia

European energy resilience needed to counter hegemony

Europe is facing a severe energy shortage this winter because of the months-long military conflict between Ukraine and Russia. The European Commission has tried to introduce a gas price cap to ease the energy pressure but is still faced with the long-term challenge of energy resilience.

From the most to the least, energy is mainly consumed by the EU's industry sectors, transport, households, services and agriculture.

Petroleum products dominate the final energy consumption in the EU at 35 percent, followed by electricity at 23 percent, natural gas and manufactured gas at 22 percent, and solid fossil fuels — mostly coal — at 3 percent. Real renewable energy consumption is higher than the reported 12 percent.

Energy imports have been important for the EU. In 2020, 58 percent of the EU's energy was imported, lower than the 60 percent in 2019, because of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Almost two-thirds of the energy imports were petroleum products (including crude oil), 27 percent natural gas and 5 percent solid fossil fuels.

In 2020, the EU's dependence rate on imported crude oil was 96.2 percent, natural gas 83.6 percent and coal 35.8 percent. More than half of the EU member states have over 90 percent dependence on crude oil in gross available energy and some even 100 percent.

Russia has been a major supplier of crude oil, natural gas and solid fossil fuels to the EU. In 2020, Russia provided 29 percent of the EU's crude oil, 43 percent of its natural gas and 54 percent of its solid fossil fuels.

However, the EU has tried hard to reduce its energy dependence on Russia, which would also reduce the opportunities for Russia to obtain external funds. The European Commission proposed the REPowerEU plan in March to "make Europe independent from Russian fossil fuels well before 2030".

> **In the long term, the EU will make its energy supply greener and more resilient. But, it also needs to establish energy market solidarity, improve its energy infrastructure and balance the energy supply security between member states.**

Meanwhile, Russia has used its energy supply to press the EU. The tug of war changed when the Nord Stream 2 pipeline, which delivers Russian gas to Germany, exploded in late September, saboteur unknown.

In 2021, the EU imported 83 percent of its natural gas and consumed 412 billion cubic meters; almost one-third for power and heating generation, 24 percent for households, 22.6 percent for industry and about 10 percent for services. More than 30 percent of households use gas for heating.

Russia's share in the EU's gas market was around 50 percent until the second half of 2021 when a sharp decline set in. Meanwhile, other gas suppliers rapidly increased. Between January and August 2022, the EU imported nearly 40 bcm of liquified natural gas, or LNG, from the United States, almost twice the amount of the total in 2021.

However, the much higher price of US LNG caused energy prices to soar and people and companies in many EU member states have protested against the excessive energy price spikes and the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

Gas stored earlier this year is not enough to get the EU through this winter. How to fill the energy gap following the rupturing of the Nord Stream 2 pipeline, high spot price of gas and uncertain quantity of gas output from third countries remains a question.

In October, the European Council introduced measures such as joint purchasing to secure a ceiling on gas prices and security of supply. But the member states continue to argue a lot over various concerns including economic development and people's living conditions.

In the short term, the EU can resume energy production in the bloc, continue diversifying suppliers, and increase nuclear power plants to fill the energy tap. The resilience of energy can be strengthened by reducing energy consumption, enhancing energy conservation and importing more LNG.

However, the increasing LNG supply from the US and the unstable capacity of renewable energy — such as photovoltaic power, hydropower, and wind — in winter have added to the EU's energy supply uncertainties.

Another question is how much the EU can pay for more expensive gas and other alternative energy that is very likely to see price hikes.

In 2020, the industry sector held the largest energy consumption share in the EU at 32 percent. To meet the energy demands of households and public services, the EU has had to impose restrictions on high energy-consumption companies.

Thus, many large companies halted or reduced production and moved out of Europe. There have been worries that measures to control energy consumption and demand will result in an economic downturn and fiscal revenue reduction, leading to some EU member states suffering difficulties offering enough subsidies to households, public services and small and medium-sized enterprises.

In the long term, the EU will make its energy supply greener and more resilient. But, it also needs to establish energy market solidarity, improve its energy infrastructure and balance the energy supply security between member states.

It will take years or more for the EU to realize energy decoupling from Russia in the throes of economic and political turbulence. Diversification of energy supplies is also a time and money-consuming process that includes huge investments in infrastructure such as new pipelines and LNG terminals.

In addition, countries and regions rich in energy resources usually become the center of or are involved in geopolitical conflicts. For the sake of long-term energy security, the EU should join hands with other countries and organizations to protect regional peace and resist hegemonic actions in any form that disrupt peace.

The author is an associate professor at the Institute of European Studies, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences.
The views don't necessarily represent those of China Daily.

Chen Weihua

The author is chief of China Daily EU Bureau based in Brussels. chenweihua@chinadaily.com.cn

Multipolar world needs China and EU

The visit by European Council President Charles Michel to Beijing on Thursday comes at a critical time for China and the European Union as well as the entire world. It has sent a resounding message that China and the EU, as two major players in a multilateral world, oppose a new Cold War and any bid to divide the world into geopolitical blocs.

EU members were among those which suffered the most in the last Cold War, when many regarded each other as enemy states.

As a place which triggered the last two World Wars, the EU should not let its bloody history repeat itself by sleepwalking into another wider war.

The EU and its member states, many also NATO members, should use their influence to de-escalate the Russia-Ukraine conflict. The lack of diplomatic efforts has exacerbated the suffering of the Ukrainian people.

The spillover of the conflict has also harmed EU economies and the rest of the world, especially the poor developing nations given the rising energy prices and growing food crisis.

> **China and the EU have benefited enormously from globalization. A deglobalized and bifurcated world means everyone will be worse off.**

It is understandable that all sides want to appear a winner, but to stop the conflict means Russia, Ukraine and NATO need to reach a compromise, a compromise that everyone is a winner. China could help to find a consensus to achieve peace.

China has acted responsibly since the outbreak of the conflict by urging restraint and dialogue while refraining from adding fuel to the fire, a stance also held by many other countries such as India, Brazil, Indonesia and South Africa.

Stopping the hot war on European soil should indeed be a top priority for the EU, but preventing a looming new Cold War is equally urgent, if not more.

Having successfully pressured the EU countries to give Chinese telecommunication companies such as Huawei a cold shoulder, the US is now again abusing its outsized influence in Europe in a bid to force the EU states to impose its strict curbs on semiconductor exports to China, a move that has nothing to do with competition but waging an economic war.

Some European leaders, including those of France and the Netherlands, have opposed such US attempts, which infringe upon their national sovereignty.

But the EU should speak with a stronger and unified voice against such bifurcation of the world in technology and supply chains, something that United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres has long warned against.

China and the EU have benefited enormously from globalization. A deglobalized and bifurcated world means everyone will be worse off.

It will certainly make efforts to tackle common global challenges much more difficult. Climate change, nuclear proliferation, the pandemic, global governance and global economic growth all require concerted efforts by the whole world, especially China and the EU.

China and the EU don't see eye-to-eye on some issues, but those differences should not prevent them from engaging each other to expand mutually beneficial cooperation. On the contrary, only more engagement and cooperation can help narrow the differences.

As each other's major trading partner, China and the EU depend on each other. It's a total fallacy to argue which depends on the other more. While some say that the EU has a dependency issue with China, many EU trade experts say that China depends on the EU more.

The fast-growing Chinese market with one-fifth of humanity is a huge opportunity for the EU. The EU market is also very attractive to China. It would be a shame for political leaders to let zero-sum geopolitics waste such a golden opportunity for their businesses and people.

Tree leaves inject life into old artform

By YUAN SHENGGAO

Long before copying machines were invented, the ancient Chinese had come up with a way to replicate patterns, drawings or characters engraved on oracle bones, bronze ware and stone tablets.

The tools for such an art were quite simple: a piece of rice paper, ink and a cloth ball or brush. The artists first covered the inscriptions with a piece of rice paper, and then tamped down on the paper into the inscriptions with a cloth ball soaked in light ink. When the paper was peeled off, the rubbings would be imprinted. This was something similar to children tracing a coin's patterns with pencil and paper.

To this day, rubbing is still a popular art in the circles of Chinese calligraphers and painters, who want to have copies of calligraphic and painting works rubbed from ancient relics to study, imitate or just to enjoy.

Cao Xiumin, 54, is a renowned rubbing artist in Taiyuan, Shanxi province. She has been working in this trade for more than three decades. Her works have been collected by calligraphers, painters and museums throughout the country.

But it was in recent years that she targeted tree leaves with remarkable vein patterns for her rubbing works.

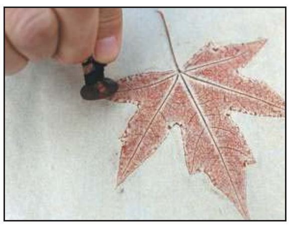
In 2020, Cao began to collect maple, bamboo, ginkgo and bodhi leaves as the objects for rubbing.

It is popular among Chinese people to use leaves with unique vein patterns as bookmarks and as the ornaments or backgrounds for painting and calligraphic works. Cao found that dried leaves are not easy to preserve but the rubbings can last long.

"Theoretically, the rubbing of leaves is similar to working on hard objects like stone tablets, but the use of the hand's strength and the selection of paper are quite different," Cao said. She added that more subtle skills are needed to produce fine works.

Dozens of artists in Shanxi and China are creating miniature works of calligraphy or painting on the rubbings made by Cao, praising her for "rendering a new, long-lasting life to the leaves that were so easy to perish".

Zhong Qing contributed to this story.



An example of leaf rubbing by Cao Xiumin. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Employees work at a smart medicine production line in Shanxi No 1 Traditional Chinese Medicines Group. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Modernizing strategy validated by congress

China Shanxi

Party's emphasis on innovation reinforces province's efforts to upgrade industries with new tech

By YUAN SHENGGAO

The 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, which was held in Beijing in October, had highlighted innovation, saying that it will remain at the heart of China's modernization drive.

In Shanxi province, innovation is also a keyword among officials, corporate executives and residents when they are talking about what they've learned from the spirit of the congress and what achievements they've made over the past years as a result of innovation.

Li Wuyang, an executive at Shanxi Intelligent Electronic Technology based in Jincheng city, said Shanxi is now implementing an innovation-driven development strategy. His company is among the many businesses in the province that have reaped the fruits of innovation.

Shanxi Intelligent is a producer of printed integrated circuit boards and other IC components for a wide range of industries including telecommunications, computers, automobiles and healthcare.

Li said his company has been constantly upgrading its operations toward smart manufacturing, which has helped to improve its competitiveness.

"In our plants, we have 24 advanced production lines using smart surface-mounted technology, eight dip-coating lines and 15 smart packaging lines, which can ensure production meets the diversified demands of clients," Li said.

He added that the company's management is encouraged by the congress' highlight on innovation. It is aiming to make Shanxi Intelligent a provincial role model for smart manufacturing.

Shanxi Intelligent is located in the Jincheng Photoelectronics and Machinery Industry Park. The park has attracted 105 enterprises in the fields of photoelectronics and machinery, becoming a high-tech engine for the city's high-quality development, according to an official at the park.

The officials predicted that the park's total output value is expected to reach 50 billion yuan ($6.98 billion) in three years and 100 billion yuan in five years.

Far from the big cities and manufacturing boomtowns, innovation is also the keyword in rural Shanxi, which is in a process of agricultural modernization.

Chen Yongxin, a corn breeding researcher at Shanxi Agricultural University, is one of the contributors to agricultural modernization.

Her unique contribution is the varieties of sweet and sticky corn breeds that are high in quality, taste good and have a big market potential.

Zhang Guohua, a farmer in You'ao village in Xinzhou city, is one of the beneficiaries of Chen's research.

"Ms Chen told me planting sticky corns together with muskmelon can ensure better yields," Zhang said. "I did so and this year's yields of both earned me 200,000 yuan in net income."

Chen said she was encouraged by the congress for its highlight on innovation, especially in the field of agricultural modernization.

"The work report of the congress highlighted the role of breeding research in agricultural modernization," she said. "I think this is a confirmation of my efforts in decades."

Chen's research has led to the breeding of a wide range of sticky corn varieties under the brand name of Jinnuo.

The latest variety, Jinnuo No 20, has been planted in 26 provinces, autonomous regions and cities across China.

In Shanxi, the traditional Chinese medicine industry is another sector that wants to capitalize on innovation for sustained development.

Zhendong Group, based in the city of Changzhi, is a TCM manufacturer that has been vitalized through innovations.

According to Lei Zhenhong, a senior executive of the group, Zhendong's innovative moves include the standardization of medical herb farms and production plants; sustaining investment in research and development; and integration with Western medicine sciences.

The group's branch company, Zhendong Pharmaceuticals, is the first company in Shanxi to be listed on China's Growth Enterprise Market.

Zheng Lu and Zheng Na contributed to this story.

City revolutionizes use of coal-bed methane

By YUAN SHENGGAO

The recent operation of China's largest coal-bed methane field in Qinshui county in Jincheng city has made the headlines of the energy industry in Shanxi province.

The Northern China Branch Company of China National Petroleum Corp announced the launch of the operation of a coal-bed methane extraction well with an annual output of 550 million cubic meters in June, pushing the annual output of its Zhengzhuang-Fanzhuang coal-bed methane field to 2 billion cu m, the largest in the nation.

But it was nothing extraordinary for industry insiders in Jincheng, which pioneered the development and utilization of coal-bed methane in China in the 1990s and has since made steady progress.

Lanyan Coal-Bed Methane Group, based in Qinshui county, was the first company to operate a coal-bed methane extraction facility in the early 1990s, according to Feng Qilong, an executive of the company.

Contained in the same stratum with coal, coal-bed methane is usually seen as the byproduct released from coal mining, according to Feng. He added that it was traditionally viewed as a hazardous gas as its concentration reaching a certain degree could lead to a mining shaft explosion.

However, it could be turned into a clean fuel for industries and households if there are safe extraction, storing and transporting technologies in place.

"In China we pioneered the development of the technology to extract coal-bed methane on the surface in the 1990s," Feng said, "This marked a revolution in the coal-bed methane industry in terms of both efficiency and safety."

The success story of Lanyan has encouraged a number of domestic companies, including CNPC and China United Coalbed Methane, to invest in the coal-bed methane industry in Jincheng.

According to Xing Haibin, head of Jincheng's energy bureau, these companies have invested a total of 38 billion yuan ($5.3 billion) in building more than 10,000 drilling wells in Jincheng.

Total output of the gas is expected to reach 7 billion cu m this year, making Jincheng the largest coal-bed methane production base in China. And the annual output is projected to hit 10 billion cu m by 2025, according to Xing.

The city also features diverse application scenarios for the coal-bed methane. The gas has been used as the fuel for power plants, ceramic companies, vehicles and households.

All the ceramic producers in Jincheng's Yangcheng Ceramics Industry Park, for instance, have used coal-bed methane to fire their kilns, taking the place of coal and substantially cutting the emissions of carbon dioxide and pollutants.

Xing predicted that the total output value of Jincheng's coal-bed methane industrial chain will reach 50 billion yuan in 2025 and surpass 100 billion yuan in 2030.

Wang Tianxiao contributed to this story.

Workers check equipment at a coal-bed methane field in Jincheng. YU YAN / FOR CHINA DAILY

Event highlights history of landmark museum

By YUAN SHENGGAO

A unique event featuring historical style, the 2022 Jinci Ancient Chinese Culture Festival, was held at the Jinci Museum in the Shanxi provincial capital of Taiyuan on Nov 5, with shows performed by artists wearing ancient costumes.

Jinci, in the southwestern suburbs of Taiyuan, was the temple for kings of the Jin Kingdom (1033-376 BC). It is now a landmark tourist attraction in the city with centuries-old and even millennium-long ancient structures and picturesque scenery.

At the opening ceremony of the festival, visitors were treated to various shows imitating the lives of those in the Jin Kingdom as well as the later periods that followed.

Even tour guides and service staff at the museum were dressed in ancient costumes, who introduced the tourists to the history of the temple and the Jin Kingdom, as well as stories and legends related to the site and the city of Taiyuan.

According to Qiu Ping, manager for public services at Jinci Museum, this was the third time that Jinci has played host to the ancient-style cultural festival, since its inception in 2020.

About 25 kilometers from downtown Taiyuan, Jinci Temple is a historical cultural site offering fine examples of ancient Chinese architecture, landscaped gardening, sculptures, frescoes and stone stele inscriptions.

The temple features a royal garden with copious pagoda trees and a 3,000-year-old cypress, as well as palaces, moated pavilions and bridges that branch off each other.

First constructed during the Northern Wei Dynasty (386-534), the temple stands in memory of prince Ji Yu of the Western Zhou Dynasty (c. 11th century-771 BC), who became the first sovereign of the Jin Kingdom, on the site of his kingdom's capital. It was a monument to pay homage to his commitment and dedication to improving the lives of his people.

Modified and expanded over subsequent centuries, the existing temple is a diverse collection of more than 100 sculptures, bridges, terraces and buildings.

Most of the temple's dozens of buildings were built after the Tang Dynasty (618-907), primarily using wood, tiles and stone.

A number of buildings have been well preserved and retain a natural look with wooden surfaces weathered over many hundreds of years.

The most famous building at Jinci Temple is the five-story Yi Jiang Hall, built in the Song Dynasty (960-1279). Yi Jiang was the mother of Ji Yu. The hall is a grand structure decorated with yellow and green glazed edgework and carved wooden dragons coiled around its eight supporting pillars of its convex double-eave roof.

Inside Jinci Temple are painted sculptures crafted in the Song Dynasty, some of the temple's strongest historical offerings. Statues of Yi Jiang and 42 of her maids provide a vivid depiction of numerous Song Dynasty characteristics.

Jinci Temple was listed as a national 4A tourist attraction in 2001.

Wu Jia contributed to this story.

Decades of work to clean up Fenhe River pays off

By YUAN SHENGGAO

Duan Zhu, a resident in the Shanxi city of Taiyuan, has insisted on swimming in the Fenhe River for about 20 years, be it summer or winter.

The 69-year-old said that in the beginning, he used to swim in nearby ponds with a better water quality and never dared do that in the river.

"The period spanning the 1980s and 90s was the worst time for the Fenhe," Duan said. "It was a dry river most of the year, or polluted with yellowish, stinky water."

He said the deterioration of the river was the result of pollution from the coal-related industries in nearby regions. "This was also evidenced by a landscape blackened by coal dust," he said. "The trees along the river and even the sparrows on the trees were black."

With a length of 713 kilometers, the Fenhe is the second-largest tributary of the Yellow River and is regarded as the "mother river of Shanxi".

It began to deteriorate in the 1970s, featuring substantial decreases in runoff volume and worsening water quality.

Taiyuan began to improve the river in 1998. Local resident Zhang Yuhong said she is a witness to the river's transformation, as she was working in the first phase of the river's improvement project that year.

Migratory birds are spotted in Taiyuan's Fenhe Wetland Park. LIU TONG / FOR CHINA DAILY

"We started enhancing the embankment and dredging the riverbed," Zhang said. "Thousands of residents took part in the project as volunteers, wanting the river's environment to turn for the better as soon as possible."

The Fenhe began to have steady runoff in 2000, Zhang said. Efforts in controlling pollution, greening both banks and increasing the water supply have continued since.

In 2021, Taiyuan announced the completion of the comprehensive river improvement project. The 43-km section of the river has become an attractive scenic belt.

Improving the environment of the Fenhe River has been a provincewide campaign in Shanxi for decades.

The city of Linfen in the lower reaches of the Fenhe began large-scale improvements of the river in the early 2000s. The city did this by shutting down polluting enterprises and repairing the river's ecosystem.

Quwo county in Linfen is one of the beneficiaries of the river's improvement. A saline land of 170 hectares along the river has been turned into fertile ground for vegetable farming.

"The vegetable farming here generates more than 35 million yuan ($4.89 million) in net profit a year and brings steady revenue to local farmers," said Yang Xu, general manager of a company operating the farms.

Ningwu county in Xinzhou city is where the source of the Fenhe is. It was among the earliest in Shanxi to began improving the river, according to Li Jianmin, an official engaged in the river's improvement for more than 30 years.

Li said the county began to improve the river in the 1980s, with efforts focusing on curbing pollution, harnessing soil erosion and increasing vegetation coverage.

"Over the past three decades, Ningwu has phased out a total of 511 polluting enterprises," Li said. "The forest coverage has increased from 23.9 percent in the 1980s to 45.4 percent at present."

The historical source of the Fenhe is the Leiming Temple spring in Ningwu. But today it has a new source. In Toumaying village, about 20 km from Leiming Temple, the runoff of the river sees substantial growth because of water released from a water diversion project originating in the Yellow River more than 100 km away.

The increased water supply to the river has made it a better habitat for both humans and wildlife. The Fenhe Scenic Belt in Taiyuan, for instance, is now home to about 160 bird species, according to bird-watchers.

Zhao Jianjun and Li Shu contributed to this story.

Trade with China valued, US stresses

But commerce chief digs in on 'national security' barriers condemned by Beijing

By ZHAO HUANXIN
in Washington
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US Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo on Wednesday acknowledged that the United States reaps huge benefits from trade with China and does not want to see a decoupling of their economies, except in critical technology and other areas that Washington deems could "undermine" national security.

In a speech that laid out a detailed strategy to outcompete China, the commerce chief said the US is looking to "aggressively" reform and bolster its export controls and investment screening regimes to counter China, particularly surrounding emerging and foundational technologies.

Raimondo's speech came about two weeks after a summit between Chinese President Xi Jinping and US President Joe Biden in Bali, Indonesia, where the leaders aimed to set the bilateral relationship on the right course and agreed that the two countries will work together to address various global challenges.

She stressed that the Biden administration isn't looking to sever economic ties with China, but to promote trade and investment.

"We are not seeking the decoupling of our economy from that of China's," she said. "We want to promote trade and investment in areas that do not threaten our core economic and national security interests or human rights values."

Raimondo said she has met with Huang Runqiu, China's minister of ecology and environment, and proposed that the two sides work together to reduce ocean pollution and marine plastic debris.

The bulk of her remarks at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology was about what she called the US' "economic competitiveness strategy" toward China, continuing a hawkish tone that China says is aimed at containing its development.

The four-component China strategy is in line with the "invest, align, compete" policy outlined by US Secretary of State Antony Blinken in May, and Raimondo added a fourth component: advocate trade and cooperation.

The US benefits from annual trade exceeding $750 billion with China, an exponential growth from

Gina Raimondo

$4.7 billion in 1972. Exports to the country's third-largest market directly support at least 750,000 US jobs, she said.

"This trade provides revenues for American companies, jobs for American workers, and connectivity with the Chinese people," she said. "The benefits from these exports go not only to our large multinationals but also to more than 25,000 small and medium-sized enterprises that exported $33 billion to China in 2020."

Largest market

China is also the US' largest agricultural market, and farmers are on track to export $36 billion in agricultural goods to China this year, she added.

That compares with a $28 billion aid package the previous US administration provided farmers during the US-China trade conflict.

Still, Raimondo said that efforts to promote trade and investment must focus on areas that do not undermine US interests or values.

China's Foreign Ministry has noted the US has "overstretched the concept of national security" to contain and even put a stranglehold on the development of high-tech industries in other countries.

Also on Wednesday, US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said she expects there will continue to be "very strong" ties between China and the US when it comes to "mutually beneficial" trade and investment.

"And this is not something that I think would be beneficial, either to the United States or to China or to the global economy, to see erode," she said at The New York Times DealBook Summit.

Gary Hufbauer, a senior fellow and trade expert at the Peterson Institute for International Economics in Washington, said the US commerce chief's China policy represents a "mild charm offensive" by US officials — an attempt to limit decoupling to advanced technology goods and services.

"Only by concrete decisions not to put controls on certain products will the US persuade China that decoupling is no longer the overriding US policy," Hufbauer told China Daily.

Victims honored

People take part in a vigil at the University of Idaho Boise in the city of Boise, Idaho, on Wednesday in memory of four students killed in Moscow, Idaho, last month. DARIN OSWALD / IDAHO STATESMAN VIA AP

Eurozone inflation finally stops climbing

By JULIAN SHEA in London
julian@mail.chinadailyuk.com

Economies in the 19-member eurozone have been offered some brief respite from the cost of living crisis, after new figures showed that inflation has slowed down after more than a year of continuous rises.

A decline in previously soaring energy prices is thought to have been a major contributory factor to the rate, which peaked at 10.6 percent in October and slipped back to 10 percent in November, the European Union's Eurostat agency said.

Although this fall could be wiped out in the next two months, there is increasing optimism that next year's inflation outlook is now more positive.

"The fall in headline HICP (Harmonised Index of Consumer Prices) inflation from 10.6 percent in October to 10.0 percent in November was the first decline since June 2021 and was a bigger fall than originally expected," Andrew Kenningham, chief Europe economist at Capital Economics, said.

"We would not be surprised to see the headline inflation rate rise again in December or January given the volatility in the monthly numbers, but there is little doubt that it will fall rapidly next year."

The eurozone rate is based on the average national rates across the bloc, which can vary wildly. The Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania continue to struggle with inflation rates above 20 percent, whereas Spain has the lowest figure at 6.6 percent, down from 7.3 percent the month before.

Rates pressure

The new figures have increased speculation about how the European Central Bank, or ECB, will respond, with the fourth rise in interest rates this year widely expected to be announced later this month.

"We expect to raise rates further to the levels needed to ensure that inflation returns to our 2 percent medium-term target in a timely manner," ECB President Christine Lagarde said.

Sky News business reporter Ian King said the latest results had "persuaded the market that the ECB will not raise rates as aggressively at its next policy meeting", with a rise from 2 to 2.5 percent now looking more likely than the previously anticipated 2.75 percent, coming as it will after two consecutive rises of 0.75 percent.

A milder-than-expected fall across much of Europe has also taken some of the strain off energy supplies, reducing fears of a winter energy crisis, adding to a more positive feeling about the economic prospects of the new year.

German business federation BDI told the Financial Times that it had been "too gloomy" and it would be changing its forecast for the coming months.

The easing in inflation comes after a similar set of data from the United States. Earlier this month, the October consumer price index came in below expectations.

Rising above stigma

Aiming to counter prejudice in communities, social activists in Kolkata, India, on Wednesday prepare to release a hot-air balloon on the eve of World AIDS Day. DIBYANGSHU SARKAR / AFP

IS group leader killed in battle in south Syria

BEIRUT — The Islamic State group said on Wednesday that its leader Abu al-Hassan al-Hashimi al-Qurayshi had been killed in battle and announced a replacement to head up the sleeper cells.

A spokesman for the IS group said the leader was an Iraqi, and didn't elaborate on the date or circumstances of his death.

Al-Qurayshi is the latest IS leader who has been killed this year at a time when the terror group has been trying to rise again with its sleeper cells carrying out deadly attacks in Iraq and Syria.

The United States military's Central Command, or CENTCOM, said the leader had been killed in an operation carried out by the rebels in Daraa Province in southern Syria in mid-October.

Daraa is mostly controlled by Syrian government forces and rebels who have reached a consensus with the government.

In mid-October, Damascus said it had launched a joint operation against IS with former rebels in the south of the province.

Little had been known about al-Qurayshi, who took over the group's leadership following the death of his predecessor Abu Ibrahim al-Hashimi al-Qurayshi in a US raid in February in northwestern Syria.

Using an alternative acronym for IS, US National Security Council spokesman John Kirby said: "We welcome the announcement that another leader from ISIS is no longer walking in the face of the Earth."

Speaking in an audio message, the IS spokesman said Abu al-Hussein al-Husseini al-Qurayshi had been named as the group's new leader.

The spokesman did not provide details on the new leader, but said he was a "veteran" fighter and called on all groups loyal to IS to pledge their allegiance to its fourth leader.

After a meteoric rise in Iraq and Syria in 2014 that saw it conquer vast swathes of territory, IS saw its self-proclaimed "caliphate" collapse under a wave of offensives.

It was defeated in Iraq in 2017 and in Syria two years later, but sleeper cells still carry out attacks in both countries.

The group and its branches have also claimed attacks elsewhere this year, including in Afghanistan, Iran and Israel.

The IS leadership has suffered repeated blows from various quarters this year, but CENTCOM spokesman Colonel Joe Buccino said the group "remains a threat to the region".

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

IN THE EASTERN CARIBBEAN SUPREME COURT
IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUSTICE
VIRGIN ISLANDS
COMMERCIAL DIVISION
CLAIM NO. BVIHCM 0208 OF 2022

IN THE MATTER OF GOOD PROSPER HOLDINGS LIMITED
AND IN THE MATTER OF THE INSOLVENCY ACT 2003

NOTICE

NOTICE IS HEREBY given that an application for the appointment of joint and several liquidators to GOOD PROSPER HOLDINGS LIMITED (the ***Company***), whose registered office is located at Vistra Corporate Services Centre, Wickhams Cay II, Tortola VG1110, British Virgin Islands, was presented to the High Court of the British Virgin Islands on 31 October 2022 by WEALINE INTERNATIONAL (SHANGHAI) CO. LTD. c/o Harneys, Craigmuir Chambers, PO Box 71, Road Town, Tortola, British Virgin Islands. The application will be heard on Wednesday, 14 December 2022 at a time to be specified in the final Commercial Court list at the Commercial Court, High Court of Justice, Road Town, Tortola, British Virgin Islands.

Any person intending to appear at the hearing of the application, whether to support or oppose the application shall give notice of his or her intention in the manner stated below pursuant to rule 162 of the Insolvency Rules 2005. A copy of the application will be furnished on request to any director, member or creditor of the Company by the undersigned on payment of the appropriate charge for the same.

Dated: 2nd day of December 2022

Harney Westwood & Riegels LP
Legal Practitioners for the Applicant
Craigmuir Chambers
PO Box 71
Road Town, Tortola
British Virgin Islands, VG 2220
Tel: +1 284 494 2233, fax: +1 284 494 3547
Ref: 059165-0003-PRK/AIM

NOTE: Any person who intends to appear on the hearing of the application must send to the above named legal practitioners notice in writing of his or her intention so to do. The notice must state the name and address of the person giving notice and his contact details, if any; whether it is his intention to support or oppose the application; and, if he is a creditor, the amount of his debt or, if he is not a creditor, the grounds upon which he supports or opposes the application. The notice must be sent so as to reach the above named legal practitioners by no later than **1600 hours** (British Virgin Islands time) on **Tuesday, 13 December 2022** or on the business day before the hearing in the event that it is adjourned.

IN THE EASTERN CARIBBEAN SUPREME COURT
IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUSTICE
VIRGIN ISLANDS
COMMERCIAL DIVISION
CLAIM NO. BVIHCM 0206 OF 2022

IN THE MATTER OF TOTAL FORTUNE INVESTMENTS LIMITED
AND IN THE MATTER OF THE INSOLVENCY ACT 2003

NOTICE

NOTICE IS HEREBY given that an application for the appointment of joint and several liquidators to TOTAL FORTUNE INVESTMENTS LIMITED (the ***Company***), whose registered office is located at Vistra Corporate Services Centre, Wickhams Cay II, Tortola VG1110, British Virgin Islands, was presented to the High Court of the British Virgin Islands on 31 October 2022 by WEALINE INTERNATIONAL (SHANGHAI) CO. LTD. c/o Harneys, Craigmuir Chambers, PO Box 71, Road Town, Tortola, British Virgin Islands. The application will be heard on Wednesday, 14 December 2022 at a time to be specified in the final Commercial Court list at the Commercial Court, High Court of Justice, Road Town, Tortola, British Virgin Islands.

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Ref: 059165-0003-PRK/AIM

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IN THE EASTERN CARIBBEAN SUPREME COURT
IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUSTICE
VIRGIN ISLANDS
COMMERCIAL DIVISION
CLAIM NO. BVIHCM 0207 OF 2022

IN THE MATTER OF MAY DELIGHT LIMITED
AND IN THE MATTER OF THE INSOLVENCY ACT 2003

NOTICE

NOTICE IS HEREBY given that an application for the appointment of joint and several liquidators to MAY DELIGHT LIMITED (the ***Company***), whose registered office is located at Vistra Corporate Services Centre, Wickhams Cay II, Tortola VG1110, British Virgin Islands, was presented to the High Court of the British Virgin Islands on 31 October 2022 by WEALINE INTERNATIONAL (SHANGHAI) CO. LTD. c/o Harneys, Craigmuir Chambers, PO Box 71, Road Town, Tortola, British Virgin Islands. The application will be heard on Wednesday, 14 December 2022 at a time to be specified in the final Commercial Court list at the Commercial Court, High Court of Justice, Road Town, Tortola, British Virgin Islands.

Any person intending to appear at the hearing of the application, whether to support or oppose the application shall give notice of his or her intention in the manner stated below pursuant to rule 162 of the Insolvency Rules 2005. A copy of the application will be furnished on request to any director, member or creditor of the Company by the undersigned on payment of the appropriate charge for the same.

Dated: 2nd day of December 2022

Harney Westwood & Riegels LP
Legal Practitioners for the Applicant
Craigmuir Chambers
PO Box 71
Road Town, Tortola
British Virgin Islands, VG 2220
Tel: +1 284 494 2233, fax: +1 284 494 3547
Ref: 059165-0003-PRK/AIM

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WORLD

G7 set to fail on Russian oil price cap, experts say

By JAN YUMUL in Hong Kong
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Moves by the Group of Seven nations to impose a price cap on Russian oil, possibly taking effect as early as next week, are unlikely to be effective as a means of crippling Russia in its conflict with Ukraine, experts say.

The deadline for the leading industrialized nations to reach a deal on the proposed cap is Monday, when the European Union's own full embargo on purchases of Russian seaborne oil — agreed at the end of May — kicks in. The cap, a softer measure proposed by the G7, is supposed to replace the tougher EU plan to protect global supply and prevent a price surge. But there is disagreement among the 27 EU countries on the level of the cap.

The analysts said oil producers in the Middle East would be concerned that a price cap could empower oil consumers and drive producers to secure alternative market share in Europe. If Russia decides to refrain from selling oil to any country participating in the price cap, it may drive up prices, they added.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said on Thursday that Moscow, in opposing any price cap, would agree on deals with buyers directly. He also reiterated that Moscow would not supply oil to countries backing a cap, Reuters reported.

Anis Khayati, an economics professor at the College of Business Administration at the University of Bahrain, told China Daily that the proposed cap "seems to be a kind of tactic" to influence the course of Russia's conflict with Ukraine, but he believes the G7 "has goals beyond the political one".

"Economically, selling Russian oil at a lower price will lower prices in the market, which is what the consuming countries ultimately want," said Khayati.

But it would be difficult for the cap to succeed because no one can compensate for the quantities of oil Russia exports to the world and Russian shipments will not stop, as there are still willing buyers.

It has been widely reported that the G7 countries — Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States — and representatives of the EU were looking to impose a cap ranging between $65 and $70 per barrel since they announced their plans in September.

> "Economically, selling Russian oil at a lower price will lower prices in the market, which is what the consuming countries ultimately want."
>
> **Anis Khayati,** economics professor at the College of Business Administration at the University of Bahrain

But as of Nov 28, Reuters reported that EU members had failed to agree on a price cap on Russian seaborne crude oil. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky even wants a cap of $30-40 a barrel.

"If the price cap on Russian oil is eventually set by G7 at around $65-70 per barrel, then the impact on flows from major exporters in the Middle East, and global prices for crude in general, would be negligible because the cap would likely be higher than where Russian oil is currently trading," said Trey Cowan, an analyst at the Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis.

OPEC+ to make decision

OPEC+, the group comprising the member countries of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and allies including Russia, is set to meet on Sunday. OPEC in October announced it was slashing production to 2 million barrels per day, angering the US.

On Nov 24, the energy ministers of Saudi Arabia and Iraq met in Riyadh and stressed the importance of adhering to the OPEC+ output cuts, but also said they would take further measures if required, to achieve balance and stability in the market, media reported.

Li-Chen Sim, a professor at Khalifa University in the United Arab Emirates, said oil producers in the Middle East "would prefer to see no oil price cap" since such a policy "could empower oil consumers, instead of oil producers in OPEC or OPEC+", in setting oil prices.

Yesar Al-Maleki, an energy expert and Gulf analyst at the Middle East Economic Survey, said the reported proposal of $65-70 per barrel is "counterintuitive to the European and US objective" of reducing the revenue flow to Russia.

Warehouse ablaze

Smoke rises from a plastics warehouse where a fire broke out in the Russian city of Volgograd on Wednesday. The blaze covered nearly 1,500 square meters, with no casualties reported.
DMITRY ROGULIN / TASS

Briefly

UNITED STATES

Jeffries picked as first black leader in House

Democrats in the House of Representatives ushered in a new generation of leaders on Wednesday with Hakeem Jeffries elected to be the first black person to head a major political party in Congress at a pivotal time as long-serving Speaker Nancy Pelosi and her team step aside next year. Showing rare party unity after their midterm election losses, the House Democrats moved seamlessly from one history-making leader to another, choosing the 52-year-old New Yorker, who vowed to "get things done" in the new Congress, even after Republicans won control of the chamber. The closed-door vote was unanimous, by acclamation.

JAPAN

Power-saving effort goes into effect

Japan began a power-saving program on Thursday in a bid to ensure a stable electricity supply throughout the winter amid concerns over a possible power crunch. The government is asking people and businesses to make efforts to reduce their power consumption by wearing warmer clothes, lowering the temperature of air conditioners and turning off lights, among others practices, through to March. The government has also said it hopes to expedite moves to bring idled nuclear reactors back on line, providing they pass strict safety checks put in place after the 2011 nuclear disaster in Fukushima.

AGENCIES—XINHUA

President Joe Biden (right) and French President Emmanuel Macron depart after a dinner in Washington on Wednesday. Biden was set to honor Macron with the first state dinner of his presidency on Thursday.
ANDREW HARNIK / ASSOCIATED PRESS

Macron takes gloves off on US subsidies

Biden's trade policies 'super aggressive', French leader says in warning of split

WASHINGTON — French President Emmanuel Macron fired a volley at his hosts on the first day of a rare state visit to the United States, telling lawmakers on Wednesday that US industrial subsidies are "super aggressive" against European competitors.

"This is super aggressive for our business people," a reporter heard Macron tell members of Congress and business leaders, who had invited him to lunch ahead of the main part of the state visit on Thursday, when the French leader was to spend most of the day with President Joe Biden.

Macron was referring to Biden's signature policy called the Inflation Reduction Act, or IRA, which is set to pour billions of dollars into environmentally friendly industries — with strong backing for US-based manufacturers.

The White House touts the IRA legislation as a groundbreaking effort to reignite US manufacturing and promote renewable technologies, but European Union members are crying foul, threatening to launch a trade war by subsidizing their own green economy sector.

Macron's blunt assessment, saying he just wanted "to be respected as a good friend", tore some of the veneer off a carefully choreographed state visit intended to celebrate historic US-French ties — and also tackle the trickier parts of the US-EU trans-Atlantic alliance.

"I don't want to become a market to sell American products because I have exactly the same products as you," said Macron, stressing that France has its own middle class in need of employment. "And the consequence of the IRA is that you will perhaps fix your issue but you will increase my problem. I'm sorry to be so straightforward."

The White House responded by insisting that the visit is about the two leaders' "warm relationship".

US advances in the clean energy economy will help Europeans too, White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said. The IRA "presents significant opportunities for European firms as well as benefits to EU energy security. This is not a zero-sum game".

Real sticking point

In a speech later at the French embassy, Macron insisted on the subsidies issue and said it could become a real sticking point in US relations with Europe.

While voicing support for the environmental goals of the US legislation, Macron said: "These are choices that will split the West."

Still, Macron said US-French ties remain solid, calling on both countries to heed "the bonds that history has forged between us, an alliance stronger than anything".

Earlier, Macron joined US Vice-President Kamala Harris at NASA headquarters in Washington to discuss cooperation in space — and to propose the first Frenchman on the moon.

Macron's busy schedule, which included a working lunch to discuss biodiversity and clean energy, and a visit to the historic Arlington National Cemetery, illustrated the ambitions set for the trip — the first formal state visit by a foreign leader to Washington since Biden took office nearly two years ago.

The core of the visit was scheduled to be on Thursday, including a White House military honor guard, Oval Office talks with Biden, a joint news conference and the first state dinner of Biden's presidency where Grammy-award-winning musician Jon Batiste will perform.

Everything from the menu to the entertainment to the table settings and other touches for the glitzy dinner were designed by the White House — and first lady Jill Biden — to highlight the ties that bind the US and its oldest ally, France.

Trade tensions, however, are only part of the uncomfortable flip side to the red carpet occasion.

Another gripe in Europe is the high cost of US liquefied natural gas exports — which have surged to help compensate for canceled Russian deliveries.

There is also divergence on how to deal with China. The question — with Washington pursuing a more hawkish tone and EU powers trying to find a middle ground — is unlikely to see much progress, Agence France-Presse commented.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

Canada, China need to address obstacles

By RENA LI in Toronto
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The current political and economic landscape has posed numerous challenges on Canada's relationship with China over the past few years, but former Canadian politicians at a business forum this week believe there are ways for the two countries to reengage with each other.

Following the arrest of Huawei executive Meng Wanzhou in 2018, Canada's relations with China have taken a turn for the worse.

"We've gone from sunny ways with China to dark days with China," said Jean Charest, former Canadian deputy prime minister and former Quebec premier, during the forum hosted by the Canada China Business Council on Tuesday.

It is harder to rebuild than damage a relationship if the government will not take responsibility, he said.

"Now, our biggest challenge is (to) define our core interests as a country, not just as a neighbor of the US, but define what our core interest is," Charest told the webinar.

The upcoming COP15 meeting on biodiversity in Montreal, to be chaired by China, would be an opportunity for the two countries to work together, he suggested.

Observers are hoping the talks will deliver a landmark deal to protect nature and reverse the damage humans have done to forests, wetlands, waterways and the millions of species that live in them.

"We have to look for opportunities to reengage at the highest level possible to build trust and start making the relationship much more workable," said Charest, adding that it will not happen easily.

Canadian Foreign Minister Melanie Joly unveiled a so-called Indo-Pacific strategy on Nov 27. It proposes changes to the Investment Canada Act to prevent state-owned enterprises and other foreign entities that are considered threats to Canada's national security from taking over critical Canadian industries and intellectual property.

In response, China's embassy in Ottawa released a statement that accused Canada of exaggerating the so-called China threat, undermining peace and stability in the region, and trying to meddle with China's internal affairs regarding Taiwan.

Charest said given the strategy delivered by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's government, Canada needs to consider how to have more redundancy in its supply chains to protect areas of strategic interest.

"China has become the manufacturer of the world, and (its) low-cost manufacturers' supply chains (are) very effective," Charest said. "But we need to stay engaged with China. We cannot just turn it off and pretend (to) the world that China doesn't exist."

Stronger GDP adds wrinkle to Fed rate increases

By HENG WEILI in New York
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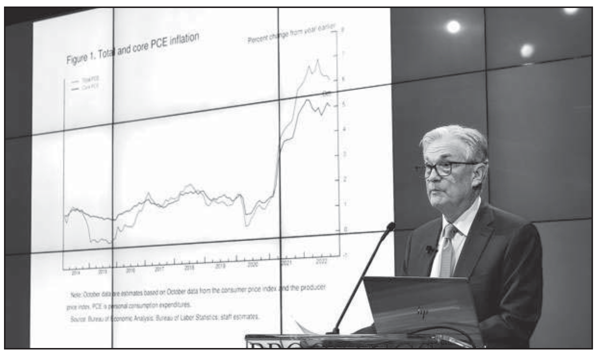
The economic situation in the United States took an interesting turn on Wednesday as third-quarter GDP rebounded more strongly than initially forecast, which will keep pressure on the Federal Reserve to continue its interest rate increases in a battle with inflation, although perhaps at a less robust pace.

"We will stay the course until the job is done," Fed Chair Jerome Powell said on Wednesday in a speech to the Brookings Institution in Washington. He noted that even though some data suggest inflation slowing next year, "we have a long way to go in restoring price stability".

"Despite the tighter policy and slower growth over the past year, we have not seen clear progress on slowing inflation," Powell said.

"It makes sense to moderate the pace of our rate increases as we approach the level of restraint that will be sufficient to bring inflation down. The time for moderating the pace of rate increases may come as soon as the December meeting."

The country's GDP increased at a 2.9 percent annualized rate, the US Commerce Department said on Wednesday in its second estimate of third-quarter GDP, up from the 2.6 percent pace reported last month. The economy had contracted at a 0.6 percent rate in the second quarter.



US Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell speaks at the Brookings Institution on Wednesday in Washington. He indicated that his bank would begin slowing its pace of interest rate hikes as soon as this month. DREW ANGERER / GETTY IMAGES

Sharpest rise in 40 years

Raymond Hill, a senior finance lecturer at Emory University's Goizueta Business School, told China Daily that together with numbers from the labor market, "it shows that we were not in a recession in Q3 and that the economy has been healthy from a growth and jobs perspective (if not from an inflation perspective)".

The Fed's response to the sharpest rise in US inflation in 40 years has been a similarly abrupt increase in interest rates. With half a percentage-point increase expected at its Dec 13-14 meeting, the central bank will have lifted its overnight policy rate from near zero as of March to the 4.25-4.50 percent range, the swiftest change in rates since then-Fed chair Paul Volcker battled an even worse rise in prices in the early 1980s.

"My guess is that the GDP growth numbers tilt the field somewhat in favor of another 75 basis point (interest rate) rise, but in any event, the Fed funds rate will continue to go up," Hill said. "In any event, the Fed is still playing catch-up after severely missing inflation forecasts earlier in the year, and the situation they are trying to deal with is very muddled."

Stocks rallied on Powell's comments. The S&P 500 finished up 3.1 percent on Wednesday, while the Dow Jones Industrial Average rose 737 points, or 2.2 percent. The Nasdaq Composite moved 4.4 percent higher. The Dow is now back in a bull market, which is when an index moves 20 percent above a recent low.

"Today's speech gives more hope for the possibility of that elusive soft landing," Hank Smith, head of investment strategy at Haverford Trust, told The Wall Street Journal. "From the market's perspective, there's the chance of a soft landing as opposed to a hard landing that's a traditional recession."

On the economic front, payroll services firm ADP reported that US private payrolls rose by 127,000 in November. Economists polled by The Wall Street Journal had forecast a gain of 190,000 private sector jobs.

Reuters and Xinhua contributed to this story.

RIGHT TRACK

Market mood brightens on external hopes

Stock indexes up as Fed tightening seen easing; attractive valuations big draw

By **SHI JING** in Shanghai
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Sentiment toward Chinese equities further brightened on Thursday as negative external constraints like the US Federal Reserve's aggressive monetary tightening appear to be easing gradually, market experts said.

The benchmark Shanghai Composite Index climbed 0.45 percent, extending its gains for the third consecutive day. The Shenzhen Component Index also rose 1.4 percent. The total trading value on the Shanghai and Shenzhen exchanges exceeded 1 trillion yuan ($142 billion).

The northbound capital, which foreign investors use to trade in A shares via the stock connect program between the Shanghai, Shenzhen and Hong Kong bourses, reported a net inflow of 11 billion yuan, 7 billion of which flooded the market during morning trade.

In Hong Kong, the benchmark Hang Seng Index gained 0.47 percent, while the Hang Seng Technology Index, a sub-index, rose 0.88 percent.

The Nasdaq Golden Dragon Index, which tracks Chinese companies trading on US exchanges, soared 9.62 percent on Wednesday. The index spiked more than 42 percent in November, reporting the biggest monthly surge in record.

New York Stock Exchange-listed new energy vehicle maker Xpeng saw its share price surge nearly 48 percent on Wednesday, while shares of its peers, including Li Auto and Nio, were both up by about 20 percent.

The rally of Chinese equities came shortly after Fed Chairman Jerome Powell confirmed on Wednesday that smaller interest rate increases are likely ahead and could start in December.

The US stock market responded positively with Dow Jones Industrial up 2.18 percent on Wednesday while Nasdaq closed 4.41 percent higher.

Experts at Industrial Securities said the US CPI increased 7.7 percent year-on-year in October, lower than market expectations. The US bond interest rate and US dollar index have thus dropped. Against that backdrop, the negative external factors affecting the A-share market have been weakening.

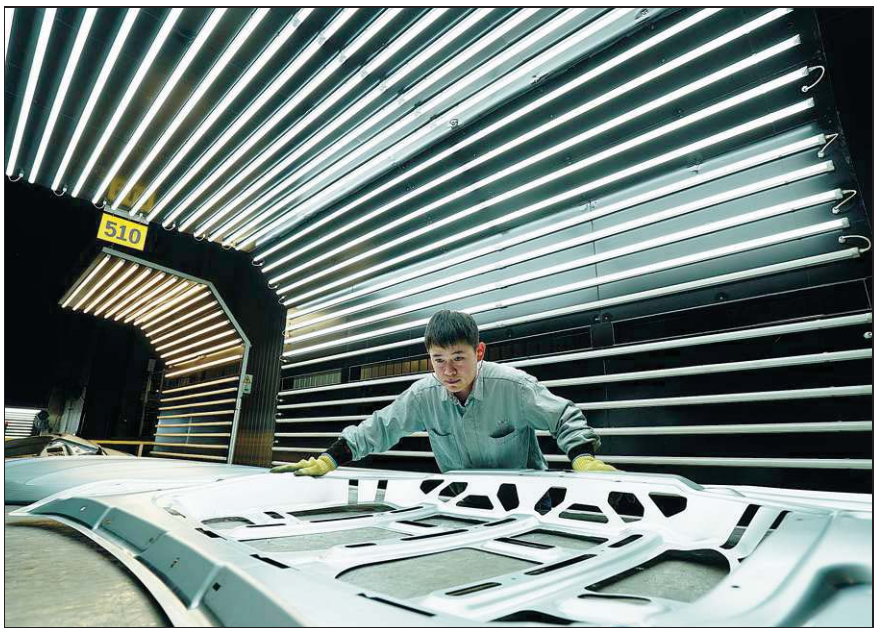
Foreign capital will likely return to the Chinese market, especially as local equities are showing higher investment value, given their valuation and risk premium, they said.

Although the greenback has appreciated strongly this year amid the Fed's six rounds of interest rate hikes, the US dollar index dropped 5.02 percent in November, showing the worst monthly performance in 12 years. Data from the US Commodity Futures Trading Commission showed that short positions in the US dollar reached $1.82 billion on Nov 22, the highest since July 2021.

The renminbi has continued its uptrend that began on Tuesday. The onshore renminbi gained more than 1,000 basis points to reach 7.08 on Wednesday. It once touched 7.04 during morning trade on Thursday. The offshore renminbi's exchange rate against the US dollar, which reflects international investors' outlook on the Chinese currency, also rose by 760 basis points on Wednesday.

Ming Ming, chief economist of CITIC Securities, said the US dollar is well past its periodical peak. So, the depreciation pressure felt by the renminbi over the past few months will likely weaken gradually.

Even if the greenback shows a higher-than-expected rebound in the following months, the renminbi is unlikely to return to the low levels seen earlier this year. China's improving economic outlook, the alleviated pressure on capital outflows in the stock and bond markets, and the satisfied demand for foreign exchange settlements will all support the renminbi's value, he said.



An employee works on the auto parts production line of a carmaker in Yantai, Shandong province. TANG KE / FOR CHINA DAILY

Nov manufacturing PMI remains in contraction status on COVID cases

By **OUYANG SHIJIA**
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China's factory activity contracted in November as renewed COVID-19 outbreaks disrupted output and subdued demand, a business survey showed on Thursday.

Although business activity has been stifled by the pandemic, experts believe the government's recent measures to fine-tune its COVID policy alongside targeted macroeconomic policy easing will help stabilize the economy and buffer COVID-19's impact.

They expect to see stronger fiscal stimulus moves and further monetary easing to shore up growth, with infrastructure investment continuously doing the heavy lifting to support GDP growth in the coming year.

The Caixin China General Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index rose modestly to 49.4 in November from 49.2 in October, staying in contraction territory for the fourth consecutive month, media group Caixin said on Thursday.

A PMI reading above 50 signifies economic expansion, while one below 50 signals contraction.

Wang Zhe, a senior economist at Caixin Insight Group, said both manufacturing supply and demand continued to shrink last month due to the increasing COVID outbreaks.

49.4

Caixin China General Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index in November

However, business optimism has strengthened. The gauge for manufacturers' expectations for future output picked up despite pressure from the pandemic, with businesses remaining confident that the outbreaks would soon wane.

"COVID outbreaks have been spreading across China since October, and their impact on the economy has grown more and more obvious," Wang said. "How to balance COVID controls and economic growth has once again become a core issue."

Wang said the market is in urgent need of policies to promote employment and boost domestic demand, and the government should further coordinate fiscal and monetary policies to expand domestic demand and raise the take-home pay of low-income people.

The Caixin survey results came after the National Bureau of Statistics on Wednesday released official manufacturing PMI readings, which dipped to 48 in November from 49.2 in October, the lowest since April of this year.

By firm size, the official manufacturing PMI in November for large, medium-sized and small firms all dropped to 49.1, 48.1 and 45.6, respectively, from 50.1, 48.9 and 48.2 in October, with manufacturing activity among smaller firms shrinking at a faster rate.

Yang Xin, an analyst at Shanghai-listed Hongta Securities, said the pandemic has weighed on business activity and warned of pressures and difficulties faced particularly by small businesses.

Citing the latest announcement by the People's Bank of China, the country's central bank, to cut the reserve requirement ratio for lenders, Yang said it will help maintain ample liquidity in the financial system and expects to see more steps to ensure stable supplies and expand demand.

The PBOC announced on Friday that it would cut the RRR for financial institutions by 0.25 percentage point on Monday — a key move to boost financing of the real economy.

Wen Bin, chief economist at China Minsheng Bank, said policymakers are ramping up efforts to stabilize the overall economy.

Owing to the COVID-19 impact, Wen expects the economy to expand at a slower pace in the fourth quarter than in the third, saying the government needs to step up policy support to reverse the downward economic trend.

Alibaba establishes beachhead in Spain

By **FAN FEIFEI**
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Chinese tech heavyweight Alibaba Group Holding Ltd on Thursday launched new e-commerce platform Miravia in Spain in a move to grab a bigger share of the local mid-range to high-end consumption market amid intensified competition from domestic rivals.

Miravia is operated independently, and products sold on the platform mainly feature Spanish and other European brands from a wide range of categories, such as beauty, fashion, personal care, electronics, foodstuffs, infant products and healthcare, Alibaba said.

Miravia, AliExpress and Lazada are three independent business segments under Alibaba. Lazada focuses on the e-commerce market in Southeast Asia, while AliExpress concentrates on cross-border online shopping.

"Spain is one of the European markets with the greatest potential in the e-commerce sector. It has a high penetration of internet and mobile technology, which is a huge potential for a mobile-driven platform like Miravia," said Yann Fontaine, CEO of Miravia.

"We hope to cover all the needs of Spanish consumers while offering local and international brands greater tools to sell and engage with their customers," Fontaine said. The platform also provides new users with promotional activities such as first order discounts and free delivery of goods exceeding 10 euros ($10.44).

Zhang Zhouping, a senior analyst of business-to-business and cross-border activities at the Internet Economy Institute, said Alibaba is stepping up efforts to explore overseas markets, and the launch of the new e-commerce platform targeting middle and high-income earners in Spain will help the company further learn about demand from Spanish consumers and better serve the local market.

The latest move is expected to cover different groups of shoppers and serves as a new experiment and business layout for Alibaba, Zhang said.

Last December, Alibaba restructured its business and created an international digital commerce unit, which includes foreign trade platforms like AliExpress, Alibaba.com and Lazada.

In its latest quarterly earnings, revenue from its international commerce segment reached 15.7 billion yuan ($2.2 billion) during the July-September period, up 4 percent year-on-year. The company said it will continue to strengthen capabilities in logistics and supply chains to serve the overseas consumer market.

"Chinese online retailers are accelerating their layout in overseas markets so as to obtain more users and seek new sources of revenue as growth in the domestic e-commerce sector is slowing," said Chen Tao, an analyst with internet consultancy Analysys in Beijing,

Chen said that although Alibaba has expanded its foothold in some European countries via AliExpress, which mainly sells cost-effective commodities, Miravia seems to adopt a differentiated strategy that mainly focuses on the mid-range and high-end market and places an emphasis on localized operations.

Other e-commerce platforms are investing heavily in boosting their global reach. Online discounter Pinduoduo Inc rolled out its cross-border e-commerce platform — Temu — targeting the US market, the company's first overseas destination, in September.

In addition, Chinese fast-fashion online retailer Shein is expanding its facilities in the US with plans to open two more distribution centers, which could help shorten delivery times to its customers by three to four days.

Known for its ultralow prices and a vast selection of fashionable clothing, Shein surpassed Amazon in app downloads on US mobile platforms for the first time in the second quarter, said mobile app data analytics firm Sensor Tower.

Briefly

PBOC conducts reverse repos to boost liquidity

China's central bank on Thursday conducted 10 billion yuan ($1.4 billion) of reverse repos to maintain liquidity in the banking system. The interest rate for the seven-day reverse repos was set at 2 percent, said People's Bank of China. The move aims to keep liquidity in the banking system stable, the central bank said. A reverse repo is a process by which the central bank purchases securities from commercial banks through bidding, with an agreement to sell them back in the future.

Blockchain should play a bigger role

Blockchain technology should be applied deeper and wider to facilitate information exchanges within a certain industry or between industries, Zhang Chao, president of OKLink, a blockchain service provider, said during a recent data forum. With data becoming an increasingly significant market resource, blockchain should be given a bigger role in data management and sharing to realize greater data value, Zhang said at the Global Data Ecosystem Conference 2022 in Singapore in late November. Zhang said he believes the blockchain will be a "critical gear" in the future internet industry, transferring information and data accurately.

XINHUA - CHINA DAILY

China urges US not to weaponize trade issues

By **ZHONG NAN**
zhongnan@chinadaily.com.cn

China urged the United States to stop politicizing and weaponizing economic and trade issues, and treat companies from all countries operating in the US fairly, the Ministry of Commerce said on Thursday.

The ministry made the remarks after the United States Federal Communications Commission, citing national security concerns, adopted new rules that will block both the import and sales of technology products from five Chinese companies.

The FCC said last week it had banned approvals of new equipment from telecom companies Huawei Technologies, ZTE and Hytera Communications, as well as surveillance equipment from Dahua Technology Co and Hangzhou Hikvision Digital Technology on grounds that they "are deemed to pose an unacceptable risk to national security".

The US has repeatedly generalized the concept of national security and abused its state power to maliciously suppress Chinese companies. China is firmly opposed to these moves, said Shu Jueting, spokeswoman for the Ministry of Commerce.

The US should immediately correct its mistake. What the US has done not only harms the legitimate rights and interests of Chinese companies, but also affects the interests of US companies and consumers. It undermines the international economic and trade order and rules, and is not conducive to the two countries or the whole world, Shu told a weekly news conference.

The booth of Huawei Technologies during an industry expo in Fuzhou, Fujian province. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

As the US' discriminatory and distorted industrial subsidy provisions in its Inflation Reduction Act have disrupted global supply chains and violated the rules of the World Trade Organization, the Chinese side made a professional analysis of the alleged violations of WTO rules by the relevant provisions of the US bill, Shu said.

The analysis found that the US stance has seriously disrupted international trade and investment, and undermined the stability of global industrial and supply chains. This was highlighted at a WTO meeting held in Geneva from Nov 24 to 25.

"China expressed serious concern over the US double standards and bullying on international trade rules," said Shu, adding China urges the US to strictly fulfill its obligations under WTO rules and safeguard the authority and effectiveness of the multilateral trading system.

As economic globalization is facing adverse trends and global economic recovery is weak, the Ministry of Commerce stressed that China is ready to work with other members to implement the outcomes of the WTO's 12th Ministerial Conference, fully and deeply participate in the WTO reform negotiations, and oppose unilateralism and protectionism. China will also contribute to the stability of global industrial and supply chains, she said.

Though the US policies and attitude toward China and trade are unstable and change frequently, US companies have not stopped investing in China, said Bai Ming, deputy director of international market research at the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation.

For instance, in late November, Cargill Inc, a Minnesota-based agricultural conglomerate, opened its second-largest grain and oil processing plant across the world in Cangzhou, Hebei province. ExxonMobil, a US energy company, is building a petrochemical project to produce performance polymers used in packaging, automotive and other products in Huizhou, Guangdong province, with a total investment of $10 billion.

Dong Yifan, assistant research fellow at the Beijing-based China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations, said, "The US companies' enthusiasm highlights that the opportunities of the Chinese market and the appeal of Chinese partners are unparalleled for large global companies."

CHINA DAILY 中国日报

BUSINESS

CNOOC ups investment in Brazil

Stake in Buzios oilfield doubles to 10%, promising energy supply for China

By ZHENG XIN
zhengxin@chinadaily.com.cn

6 percent
expected annual growth in CNOOC's oil and gas production during the 2022-24 period

CNOOC Petroleum Brasil has doubled its stake in the Buzios oilfield in Brazil to 10 percent from 5 percent, its parent China National Offshore Oil Corp announced on Thursday.

CNOOC paid $1.9 billion for the additional 5 percent stake as part of a production-sharing agreement with Petrobras, the Brazilian oil and gas giant that operates the field and holds an 85 percent stake in the venture. CNODC Brasil Petroleo e Gas holds the remaining 5 percent stake.

In 2019, CPBL signed an agreement with Petrobras for an initial 5 percent stake in the oilfield in Santos Basin, offshore southeast Brazil.

It is the world's largest deepwater pre-salt-producing oilfield with an average water depth of about 2,200 meters. It started operations in 2018.

The project is developed by the traditional deepwater pre-salt development mode called the FPSO+Subsea. Daily production has reached 600,000 barrels, said CNOOC.

Xia Qinglong, executive director of CNOOC, said acquiring additional interests in the Buzios oilfield further expands the company's presence in Brazil's deepwater pre-salt region, home to bountiful oil and gas resources.

"The transaction promotes the international development of the company and fortifies the resource base for the company's high-quality development," he said.

"The company will adhere to the concept of win-win cooperation and work closely with the host government and project partners to promote the sustainable development of Brazil's oil and gas industry, economy and society."

Li Ziyue, an analyst with BloombergNEF, said the oil and gas production of CNOOC is expected to rise more than 6 percent each year during the 2022-24 period and its continuous upstream investment and production commitment will also play a critical role in China's energy supply security.

CNOOC has been seeking to use its engineering prowess to become a major player in offshore wind power projects. It accounted for more than half of China's total oil and gas output growth in 2021, she said.

CNOOC currently owns five deepwater oil and gas block assets in Brazil. In 2013, CNOOC, Petrobras, Shell, TotalEnergies and China National Petroleum Corp formed a consortium to win the Libra block, entering the Brazilian subsalt ultra-deepwater oil and gas field for the first time.

CNOOC's booth is seen during an expo in Beijing. The company paid $1.9 billion for an additional 5 percent stake in the Buzios oilfield as part of a production sharing agreement with Petrobras, a Brazilian oil and gas company. KUANG DA / FOR CHINA DAILY

Employees work at a recreational vehicle assembly line in Rongcheng, Shandong province, in November. LI XINJUN / FOR CHINA DAILY

RV trips gain popularity in nation, inject impetus into tourism market

CHANGSHA — Wang Tao recently drove a recreational vehicle, or RV, from his hometown in Kunming, Southwestern China's Yunnan province, to Zhangjiajie — a famous tourist city — in Central China's Hunan province, realizing one of his long-held dreams.

RV tours have become increasingly popular in China in recent years. The country launched the new C6 driver's license in April, which renders more drivers eligible to get behind the wheel of certain types of RVs. By early October, Chinese authorities had issued 346,000 such licenses, allowing the RV tourism market to embrace more development opportunities.

Government authorities, enterprises and businesspersons in China are looking for new ways to stimulate the country's massive tourism sector, and RV tourism is one possibility.

The 2022 China Tourism Summit Forum, held on Nov 20 in Zhangjiajie, saw industry insiders share their opinions on high-quality tourism development and the recovery of the sector amid COVID-19 prevention and control measures.

Duan Qiang, president of the China Tourism Association, said in a video speech that the pandemic has increased uncertainty surrounding tourism development, but the huge demand of consumers for tourism has not changed, and the vitality and strong resilience of culture and tourism still exist.

> "Without driving far, we can enjoy leisure in suburban areas by camping, and it is a new experience for our family."
> **Hu Mingqi,** resident of Panjin, Liaoning province

346,000
number of RV licenses Chinese authorities had issued as of early October

Dai Bin, dean of the China Tourism Academy, said that amid the pandemic, people's needs for urban leisure and rural tourism should be regarded as new innovation growth points.

The Hunan Provincial Department of Culture and Tourism said that over the past decade, the province's tourism revenue has risen 19.3 percent annually on average. In the first three quarters, the province saw 316 million tourist trips, up 2.99 percent year-on-year.

The pandemic has slowed the development of tourism in Zhangjiajie as well as the rest of the country, but many involved in the industry are still confident about the future.

"We are also constantly improving related support facilities for our homestay and participating in various trainings," said Wu Guosheng, a homestay operator in Zhangjiajie.

Shu Xinggang, deputy Party secretary of Zhangjiajie, said that amid pandemic prevention and control measures, the government should accelerate the development of new tourism products and models such as wildlife exploration, healthcare and research tours, and promote the integration and development of information technology and tourism.

Besides driving RVs, camping, cloud museum tours and other forms of tourism have also gained popularity among people.

The Ministry of Culture and Tourism and 13 other government bodies recently released a guideline on fostering the orderly development of camping, highlighting the construction of public campsites and enhancing service quality.

The guideline calls for the vigorous development of various types of camping sites such as self-driving caravan campsites, tent campsites and youth camps to meet diversified camping needs.

"Without driving far, we can enjoy leisure in suburban areas by camping, and it is a new experience for our family," said Hu Mingqi, a resident of Panjin, Liaoning province.

XINHUA

New major gas pipeline begins trial operations

By ZHENG XIN

The Shenmu-Anping coal bed methane pipeline, China's longest such pipeline, was put into trial operation on Thursday, which will eventually ensure sufficient domestic gas supply, said its operator China National Offshore Oil Corp.

The pipeline will not only further boost gas supply capacity of Shanxi and Shaanxi provinces, but also better ensure natural gas supply in the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region. It will also enhance the company's capacity to ensure stable supplies of clean energy and contribute to the company's green and low-carbon transition, said the company, the country's largest offshore driller.

The pipeline runs from Shenmu in Shaanxi province to Anping county in Hebei province. The total length of the pipeline is approximately 623 kilometers, with a designed annual gas transmission capacity of 5 billion cubic meters, it said.

Dai Zhaohui, general manager of China United Coalbed Methane Co Ltd — a unit of CNOOC responsible for construction and operation of the pipeline — said the project has supplied more than 1.3 billion cubic meters of natural gas to regions in Shanxi and Hebei provinces after some of it was put into operation.

It is expected to provide around 500 million cubic meters of natural gas during the heating season this year to North China to further guarantee gas supply in the region, he said.

An analyst said the pipeline will effectively release the production capacity of upstream projects and help maximize the resource value of the two unconventional natural gas production bases in Qinshui Basin and the eastern edge of Ordos Basin, and provide strong support for natural gas supplies in North China.

Li Ziyue, an analyst with BloombergNEF, said coal bed methane is an important source of unconventional gas in China.

"In the first 10 months of 2022, coal bed methane output increased 9 percent year-on-year, outpacing the growth of conventional gas. Commissioning of this pipeline is expected to further ensure gas supply security in North China," Li said.

"China's efforts to step up natural gas pipeline network construction in recent years have been essential to ensuring that China's gas supply system can continue to meet the country's growing energy needs."

CNOOC said the pipeline will also be connected with liquefied natural gas terminals in Cangzhou, Hebei province, and Tianjin, as well as gas storage tanks of China Oil & Gas Pipeline Network Corp, the country's largest energy infrastructure owner — also known as PipeChina — so as to diversify gas supply in the country.

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In the past 19 years, 20% of their species disappeared or died out due to poaching, retaliatory killings, loss of habitat and climate change.

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To reverse the tide, WWF is working to help the snow leopard and its habitat conservation in 8 out of 12 range countries.

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BUSINESSFOCUS

Wine sales bolstered by young buyers

Purchases expected to double between 2021 and 2026 as market being reshaped

By **ZHU WENQIAN**
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Generation Z consumers — those born in the late 1990s or early 2000s — are expected to drive the growth of wine consumption in China in the next few years, according to a new report from GlobalData, a consulting and analytics company headquartered in London.

The report says many young consumers think that drinking wine augments beauty and health. Also, some are influenced by Western lifestyles and habits, the report found.

By 2026, sales of wines in China are predicted to hit 462.4 billion yuan ($65.4 billion), doubling the amount in 2021. The compound annual growth rate over the five-year period is expected to reach 11.5 percent for still wine and 11.3 percent for sparkling wine, fueled by increasing spending by millennial and Gen Z consumers.

"Wine is becoming a popular alcoholic drink among Chinese consumers. Young millennial and Gen Z adults, who wield considerable purchasing power, are reshaping the Chinese wine market," said Bobby Verghese, a consumer analyst at GlobalData.

"Wine vendors are adapting their product offerings, marketing and branding to suit the young cohort. Wine brands are also building their presence on leading e-commerce portals such as Alibaba's Tmall, targeting these digital newbies and natives," he said.

China has some 233 million Gen Z consumers, accounting for 17 percent of the total population. Last year, they spent nearly 5 trillion yuan, representing 11.2 percent of the total value of national consumption, according to a recent report by Guoyuan Securities.

"Women who rarely drink wine are concerned more about whether wine bottles' shapes and labels are beautiful, and whether they will look good in pictures. Women who drink often pay more attention to the wine itself, such as the level of aroma, concentration and other professional indicators, and they tend to buy relatively more expensive products," said Libby, a young blogger on Xiaohongshu, or Little Red Book, a lifestyle social media platform.

Still, due to challenges created by the COVID-19 pandemic, wine sales in China declined by 2.7 percent year-on-year by value in 2021, and sales to bars and restaurants contributed heavily to the majority of wine sales, followed by sales through retail stores and supermarkets, GlobalData found.

In 2021, China's total wine consumption reached 1.05 billion liters, down 15 percent from 2020 in volume, according to the International Grape and Wine Organization.

"Besides restrictions on some offline consumption scenarios and sales channels due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the psychology of some consumers has changed since the pandemic, and they have been focusing more on purchasing daily necessities with rigid demand. Thus, the wine market has been somewhat affected," said He Jianhong, a wine aficionado and a digital marketing strategist based in Jiangsu province.

Changyu Wine Group Co Ltd, China's biggest wine producer, said there has been a gradual restoration of its sales since the pandemic, but the impact still exists. In the third quarter, the effect of the pandemic weakened, and consumers bought wine through a greater variety of outlets.

During the Singles Day shopping spree this year on Nov 11, the Shandong province-based winemaker achieved one of the highest sales revenues among domestic wine brands.

In the first three quarters, Changyu achieved sales revenue of at least 2.81 billion yuan, up 5.2 percent year-on-year, and the value reached about 80 percent of the level seen in the same period of 2019, when there was no pandemic, according to its latest earnings report.

In the first nine months, the company's net profit reached 430 million yuan, down 3.8 percent year-on-year. Changyu expects its sales revenue this year to reach 4.2 billion yuan, with anticipated increases to 4.67 billion yuan in 2023 and 5.32 billion yuan in 2024, its earnings report said.

"In the past 10 to 20 years, domestic wine has been taking the secondary high-end or middle-end markets. We have adjusted strategies and established a special sales department that focuses on the sales of high-end wine," said Sun Jian, general manager of Changyu.

The company, founded 130 years ago, said it has adjusted its strategies and expanded wine sales overseas. It has also increased investment in the brandy business to diversify its operational risks. Compared with many listed makers of *baijiu*, Chinese white liquor, the wine industry in China still faces some challenges, and Changyu will continue to innovate in marketing, it said.

Changyu, Dynasty Fine Wines Group and Tonghua Grape Wine were the top three winemakers by volume in China last year, according to GlobalData.

A new report by wine and spirits analytics firm International Wine & Spirit Research said consumer sentiment varies widely by country. Some markets remain buoyant, with a strong desire to trade up to products of greater value or quality. The most positive markets, such as China, India and Brazil, are showing increases across almost all categories.

The United States and China are expected to account for a combined 70 percent of the global value of the e-commerce alcohol market by the end of 2024, according to the IWSR forecast.

"Wine companies are leveraging digital and social media marketing strategies, including livestreaming with key opinion leaders and celebrity brand ambassadors to connect with younger audiences. Manufacturers are also introducing smaller wine bottles to encourage novice drinkers to try out their brands or labels," said Verghese, the GlobalData analyst.

"As the COVID-19 pandemic dissipates and the economy rebounds, wine consumption is set to soar. Overseas winemakers from France, Chile and the US and local wineries are in a race to fill the void left by waning sales of Australian wines, which are hit badly by anti-dumping tariffs," he said.

In March 2021, China decided to impose anti-dumping duties ranging from 116.2 percent to 218.4 percent on Australian wine for five years. The Ministry of Commerce said Australian wines had been subsidized and sold under market value.

In another development, major foreign winemakers such as Pernod Ricard and Moet Hennessy Diageo, as well as domestic winemaker China Great Wall Wine Co Ltd, have set up production operations and vineyards in Ningxia Hui autonomous region, a major wine-producing region in China.

By 2035, the region is predicted to generate annual sales of 200 billion yuan and the scale is expected to rival that of Bordeaux, a famed wine-producing region in France, according to local government plans.

> "Wine vendors are adapting their product offerings, marketing and branding to suit the young cohort. Wine brands are also building their presence on leading e-commerce portals ... targeting these digital newbies and natives."
>
> **Bobby Verghese,** consumer analyst at consulting and analytics company GlobalData

Above: A visitor checks out Pernod Ricard products during the fifth China International Import Expo in Shanghai in November.
PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Left: Visitors gather at Changyu's booth during an international wine expo in Yantai, Shandong province.
TANG KE / FOR CHINA DAILY

Tsingtao finds success in changing beer tastes

By **ZHU WENQIAN** in Beijing and **XIE CHUANJIAO** in Qingdao

Tsingtao Brewery, a time-honored beer brand based in Qingdao, Shandong province, is upgrading its marketing concepts in line with changing tastes, company officials said.

Young people are reshaping the company's concept of appealing to those looking primarily for the value of their money. Instead, it is finding that it pays to attract those who want to associate the product with feelings such as warmth and uniqueness, they said.

The company has opened new types of taverns to cater to diverse demands and has seen business booms.

Tsingtao Brewery has opened more than 260 taverns in over 60 cities nationwide, and those taverns have found favor with the new generation of consumers.

At Liyuan tavern in Qingdao, the space is also set up for activities such as tea drinking, reading books and bed-and-breakfast stays.

The company said it hopes the taverns will satisfy different groups of consumers, such as those who like taking pictures, prefer a relatively quiet environment or wish to discuss business privately.

Company officials said the process of opening taverns has been very different from running breweries to produce beer. Operating their pubs means managing supply chain systems and maintaining standards across all their businesses, they said. The most challenging part is to deliver fresh beer to all parts of the country in the shortest time.

"For instance, the process of brewing craft beer is strict. It is produced only in Qingdao, and the quality guarantee period is only seven days. The products must be delivered quickly to other cities in the country," said Zhu Junhai, president of Tsingtao Brewery Culture Communication Co, a subsidiary of Tsingtao Brewery.

"Beer consumption in China is increasingly evolving toward being high-end, in the right setting and conducive to social interaction.

"To meet the demand, taverns are the best locations to create the feelings that consumers want. Taverns should be thought of as the top place for brand promotion, new product experiences and enjoyment of high-end and high-quality beer," Zhu said.

Tian Yiming, manager at the Liyuan tavern, said customers get a choice of services and the utilization rate of the tavern has been quite high. Business has been good since it started its trial operation in late June, and it usually requires reservations two to three days in advance to book private rooms.

Generation Z consumers, who were born in the late 1990s or early 2000s, have become a main force in the beverage consumption market, experts said. The group has grown up in an era with rapid economic growth and technological development, and their spending patterns are very different from older generations. Their preferences involve convenience, creation of enjoyable experiences and a willingness to try new products, according to a recent report by domestic market research provider Analysys International.

While some Gen Z customers still rely on their parents economically, they have become one of the groups who spend the most in China, said market research company Daxue Consulting.

To attract these customers, Tsingtao Brewery has special launches of beer in customized packaging designed around the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022. The pop-top cans are printed with different colors and languages of participating national teams to attract young consumers.

The brewer has also launched more than 200 soccer-watching parties nationwide at its trendy Tsingtao 1903 taverns and some restaurants in cities such as Beijing and Shanghai, as well as Guangzhou and Shenzhen in Guangdong province, Xiamen in Fujian province and Wuhan in Hubei province.

"The tavern is the new scene for customers to enjoy beer and life experiences in an immersive environment. It allows them to experience beer culture better," said He Yongru, secretary-general of the China Alcoholic Drinks Association.

"It will certainly become a business model that can combine the enjoyment of beer with fashion, culture and tourism, and create a new experience for consumers as well as space for the industry's growth," He said.

During the Singles Day shopping spree this year on Nov 11, the Shandong province-based brewery achieved one of the highest sales revenues among various beer brands on Alibaba's Tmall e-commerce platform. Bestsellers included its middle to high-end products and some differentiated products, such as classic beer, less-bitter white beer and craft beer, the company said.

An employee works at a Tsingtao 1903 tavern in Jinan, Shandong province, in November 2020. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

LIFE

A show where nature takes the lead role

Water flowing, birds whistling and leaves rustling, a woman moves around a thatched cottage to the accompaniment of rainforest sounds as she narrates, "The lofty Wuzhi Mountain is home to generation after generation. It is also a paradise for all living creatures. ... I have totems tattooed on my skin and songs that have been sung for thousands of years running through my veins."

This is the opening scene of *Rainforest Time*, a large-scale idyllic live performance, which debuted on Nov 13 in Maona village of Shuiman township in the city of Wuzhishan, Hainan province.

The show, lasting for about 70 minutes, consists of five parts — nature, inheritance, harvest, coexistence and gratitude. With music, dance, real-life settings and other art forms, it aims to perform and interpret three key concepts: "rainforest and mountains and rivers", "rainforest and ethnic groups" and "rainforest and village".

In the show, actors present the beauty of the sun, the moon, mountains, rivers, flowers, birds and trees that contribute to a sustainable, green lifestyle, as well as the Li and Miao ethnic groups picking tea and planting rice, showing their awe of, and gratitude to, nature.

"The audience will be impressed by the strong visual contrast between the green mountains and clear waters of the tropical rainforest and the ethnic costumes featuring black and red," says Lin Qing, director of *Rainforest Time*. "With the charm of local music and beautiful choreography, the audience can get to know the history and culture of this land."

One member of the audience was impressed. "The scenes of daily life and work that I have seen since I was a child are presented onstage," says Zhuo Shuyan, a woman in her 30s, from Shuiman township. "This is the show we locals want to see. It shows our harmonious coexistence with nature. The confidence in our ethnic culture is definitely boosted."

Behind the scenes

Since November last year, the show's production team has done thorough research on the cultural elements of the Li and Miao ethnic groups in Hainan. For example, many of the costumes featured in the performance are inspired by patterns of traditional Li brocade-weaving, according to Lin.

As well as creating an original soundtrack for the show, the production team also adapted classic local songs about Wuzhi Mountain, such as *The Five Rivers of Wuzhishan*, *I'm Wuzhishanese* and *I Love Wuzhi Mountain, I Love Wanquan River*. "With the classic lyrics, we want to arouse the pride and glory of Wuzhishan residents, enabling more people to learn about the area and its locals," Lin says.

Constant revisions have been made since official rehearsals started in July. The woman's narration in the opening scene has been rewritten more than 20 times, and the production team has drawn more than 800 sketches for the show's venue and actors' positions, according to Lin.

The site is located at the foot of Wuzhi Mountain.

With a real-life setting, the show gives an authentic presentation of the tropical rainforest's majesty. "We want to convert rich tropical rainforest resources into high-quality ecological products," Lin says.

To save the cost of lighting and stage effects, the show takes place in the daytime. However, this can be "very challenging", according to Lin, as it means "there is no cover for possible mistakes".

Briton Bob Myerscough, 72, who lives in Wuzhishan city, was among the audience. He was "impressed and surprised" by the show, he says. "When you do music outside, it's not easy. It's like if you march in the army and you are behind the band, you'll hear the 'boom, boom, boom' of the drums. But the further away you are, the bigger the delay in the beat of the drum — but you still need to stay in step with it. So the actors did a very good job in such a large venue. The show is very well put together."

Above: With a real-life setting, *Rainforest Time*, a large-scale live performance that debuted last month in Maona village, Wuzhishan, Hainan province, positions its stages at the foot of Wuzhi Mountain.
Left: Performers demonstrate the harvesting of tea leaves in the show, which takes place in the daytime, to save the cost of lighting and stage effects.
PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

There are 50 professional actors and 430 extras in the cast. "Most of the actors are ordinary people selected from the local square-dancing groups," Zhang Huawei, deputy secretary-general of Hainan provincial government, said in the show's opening speech. "It is a down-to-earth event where people perform, people watch, and people enjoy."

It was quite tough to get all the extras to adapt to the production team's arrangements. The extras are not physically fit enough to run across the entire venue like the professionals. It took them months to reach the required level, although the movements had been already adjusted to match their physiques.

Zhao Liye, 68, an extra, says that all the actors practiced every two days from 8 pm to 9:30 pm, be it rainy or windy. For an elderly man like himself, he had to overcome many difficulties. But for him, "it's a great honor to be a member of such a great show".

The extras practiced often, and in every corner of Wuzhishan. Some in the rice fields, and others in public squares. They shed blood, sweat and tears but stuck together for the show. "When you watch the show, you'll find their smiles and movements are very expressive," Lin says. "I can say the show is composed by gestures of hard work. It is because of these people that everything is possible."

More to see and enjoy

The performance is part of the five-year provincial activity Rainforest and You. Until the end of this year, more than 10 sub-activities surrounding Hainan Tropical Rainforest National Park will be held, including nature education, forest therapy, leisure and vacation, sports events, ecological science popularization and wildlife sightseeing.

"Via Rainforest and You, we want to help people at home and abroad understand the role, function and beauty of rainforests, and motivate them to join in and support their protection," says Zhou Yadong, chief engineer of the Forestry Department of Hainan Province. "The activity helps to cultivate Hainan Tropical Rainforest National Park's culture, spread the concept of our park, and comprehensively display the achievements of tropical rainforest protection and our national park's construction."

> "The audience will be impressed by the strong visual contrast between the green mountains and clear waters of the tropical rainforest. ... With the charm of local music and beautiful choreography, the audience can get to know the history and culture of this land."
>
> **Lin Qing,** director

President Xi Jinping said on his inspection tour of Hainan in April that Hainan Tropical Rainforest National Park is a national treasure, which helps conserve water sources, boost grain production and provides economic benefit, playing a key environmental role.

This year marks the first anniversary of the establishment of Hainan Tropical Rainforest National Park. The national park covers an area of 4,269 square kilometers, spanning nine cities and counties. And 63 percent of Wuzhishan city is included in the national park. "In other words, we can call the city of Wuzhishan the city of the national park," says Zhou.

The event debuted in Wuzhishan also because "the city's government has a great awareness of protecting its local ecosystem, and takes effective actions", Zhou adds. "While protecting the rainforest, it also guides locals to take a development path of ecological agriculture."

Maona village of Shuiman township is known as a successful example of combining environmental protection with ecological economic development.

Zhang says: "It is of great significance to display the coordinated development results of rainforest ecological protection and rural vitalization, as Hainan is building itself into a national pilot zone for ecological conservation."

"We sincerely welcome more people to visit Wuzhishan," says Yu Qian, head of Wuzhishan city's publicity department. "Here you'll be far from bustling crowds, walk among mountains and rainforests, experience an exclusive tour, get a closer look at Wuzhishan, and know why it's known as an 'emerald jade city'."

"Hainan is about not only blue sky, white clouds and beautiful beaches, but also the magnificent and mysterious rainforest," says Yang Haidi, author of *This Beloved Land: Hainan Tropical Rainforest National Park*, who attended the show, *Rainforest Time*.

Contact the writer at chenbowen@chinadaily.com.cn

Tomb-guarding for iconic poet is act of good faith

HEFEI — Gu Changxin, 55, is the 49th generation tomb keeper in his family, for Li Bai, ancient China's iconic Tang Dynasty (618-907) poet, who died in what is now Anhui province in East China.

Gu's family has the responsibility of keeping a millennia-old promise made to Li.

Their ancestor Gu Lanxin gifted the bedridden poet a good plot of land in today's Gujia village, Dangtu county, in 762 to be used as his final resting place, and vowed to guard his graveyard out of respect and their long-standing friendship.

Li is a household name in China in much the same way as Shakespeare is in the United Kingdom, or Tagore in India.

He lived between 701 and 762, considered a golden age of Chinese poetry, and his work is brimful of patriotism and romanticism.

Gu's generational relay of guarding the tomb serves as a great testimony to Li's famous verse on good faith, "*hai yue shang ke qing, tu nuo zhong bu yi*", meaning that, even if the oceans dry up and mountains fall apart, the promise made remains unchangeable.

Chinese people have long cherished good faith as one of their top values and essential virtues in life and pursued harmony.

In Dangtu county, the good faith of the locals has not just solidified a good reputation, but also brought tangible benefits.

In August 2019, the county launched a pilot credit-rating program in the towns of Wuxi and Huhe, which can grant the villagers low-interest unsecured loans via cooperation with local banks.

Based on solid evidence and cautious ratings on personal performance, Shi Hailin in Qifang village received a total of 600,000 yuan ($83,700) of loans via the program to buy materials, upgrade equipment and expand his crab-farming business. Shi's good faith was proved by daily good acts, including keeping promises, active participation in social welfare activities, respecting the elderly, and caring for the young.

Different from the conventional credit rating system, the county's programs advocate more good faith embodied in a person's daily performance.

"The loans need no collateral because honesty is the best alternative," says Li Baogen, deputy Party secretary of Qifang village.

XINHUA

Restoration offers gateway to the past

Shanghai's largest heritage complex has reopened to the public, and despite the introduction of modern elements, the former residential compound retains much of its old charm, **Lin Shujuan** reports.

It has been more than three years since Huang Min, a 68-year-old Shanghai resident, got the chance to revisit her former residential compound Zhang Yuan, a community filled with hundreds of *shikumen* houses in downtown Shanghai's Jing'an district.

Located just off Nanjing Road West at the corner of Taixing Road and Wujiang Road, Zhang Yuan, or Zhang's Garden, is widely known as Shanghai's largest, best-preserved and most diverse *shikumen* compound.

In January 2019, after more than 1,100 families living in 170 units in the compound's 42 historical buildings were relocated, Zhang Yuan became the first urban renewal project in Shanghai to implement a protective expropriation plan.

The local government has since spared no effort in restoring the compound to its former glory.

After nearly four years of renovation, the western part of the compound, which consists of 16 buildings that currently serve as venues for international brands such as Louis Vuitton, Vacheron Constantin and Moet & Chandon, was reopened to the public on Thursday.

On Nov 25, Huang, a former resident who now lives in a neighborhood nearby, was invited to revisit the compound ahead of its reopening.

"Coming back here reminds me of my childhood when I used to jump rubber bands in the open space in front of this building," Huang says.

Huang talks in front of the building near the gate of Zhang Yuan on Weihai Road. The building now houses the largest flagship store of Vacheron Constantin in China.

Pointing to a nearby three-story building which is still undergoing renovations, she says: "We used to live there."

Huang's family, which consists of six members across three generations, used to live in a tiny room measuring just 38 square meters. There were 11 other households residing in the three-story building.

Life back then was difficult as residents lived in cramped spaces and had to share the kitchen and toilets, she recalls. But despite the harsh living conditions, Zhang Yuan was always better known for being a landmark adorned with intricate carvings on its stone gates, elegant curves on staircase railings and doorknobs made of crystal.

The compound was built in 1882 by Zhang Shuhe (1850-1919), a merchant from Wuxi in Jiangsu province. Zhang had bought a piece of farmland in Shanghai from a Briton named Francis Groom before building a garden home for his mother.

Zhang opened the garden to the public after his mother's death in 1885 and later built a Western-style mansion called Arcadia Hall, a place where people could enjoy a wide view of Shanghai. He also expanded the garden space to more than 4 hectares.

With the introduction of entertainment options such as a roller-coaster, circus performances and pleasure boats, Zhang Yuan quickly became a well-known public space and one of the few private gardens that were open to the public in Shanghai. Its other amenities included a dance hall, a theater for Chinese opera, a photography studio, a teahouse and restaurants.

Before it became a residential compound in the 1920s, the location was dubbed "the No 1 public garden of Shanghai".

It was the place where the first electric lamp in China was lit, the first bicycle race in China took place, and where the country's first outdoor photo booth was opened. It was also the place where kung fu master Huo Yuanjia (1868-1910) challenged Western boxers so as to prove to the international community that Chinese were courageous fighters. Peking Opera maestro Mei Lanfang (1894-1961) also made his debut performance at a private event there.

In 1890, a Western performer took off from Zhang Yuan in a hot-air balloon before parachuting to the ground. This event was documented in the Oct 17 issue of the North China Herald. In the late 1900s, Arcadia Hall became a popular public speech venue that was graced by revolutionaries such as Sun Yat-sen (1866-1925), Huang Xing (1874-1916) and Cai Yuanpei (1868-1940).

The compound was closed down in 1918 after a period of decline and its land was eventually sold when Zhang died a year later. The new owner divided the land into 28 blocks and resold them to different developers that built a series of *shikumen*, which literally means "stone-framed gate", an architecture style that first appeared in Shanghai in the 1860s.

After the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, most of these residential buildings became State-owned, and the city assigned up to 10 households to each building.

Huang Min used to live across the street of Zhang Yuan. In the 1990s, her family moved to the compound after their neighborhood was relocated. By that time, Zhang Yuan was akin to a slum that was overcrowded with people who did not have access to proper toilets.

To conserve the heritage of Shanghai and improve the living conditions, the municipal government decided to relocate all the residents in 2018 and protect the buildings, according to Shi Yunlun, president of the Jing'an Real Estate Group, the State-owned enterprise responsible for the conservation and restoration of Zhang Yuan.

"Zhang Yuan is the first urban renewal project in Shanghai to implement a protective expropriation plan," Shi says. "Maintaining the cultural heritage and characteristics of the *shikumen* houses has been the top priority of this project."

According to Shi, the company had in 2015 established a database for the 170 residential units in the compound. Each unit has its own file, which consists of information such as the original house plan, adaptations through the years, architecture details, images from former residents, as well as protection and control suggestions for subsequent protection, repair and utilization. The house file for some units exceeds 400 pages.

The creation of this database took more than three years, making Zhang Yuan the first in the country to record housing data in such a comprehensive manner. This practice has since been adopted for all urban renewal projects in Shanghai.

According to Shi, preserving the integrity of the architecture and even its fixtures was of the utmost importance.

"From the bricks to the tiles to the doors to even the mottled traces on the walls of the buildings, the renovation team tried their best to preserve or restore as much as possible," Shi says.

"But the buildings will ultimately be lifeless if they were just being restored and not utilized," Shi adds. "This is why we hope to inject new vitality to the compound and turn it into a new cultural landmark, open space and name card of the city."

According to the district's plans, all the houses in the compound will be restored and refurbished. Furthermore, underground spaces will be constructed, and a commercial compound spanning more than 150,000 square meters, along with a gallery, a boutique hotel and a high-end office compound, will be introduced.

"Zhang Yuan is set to become a place that offers modern amenities while allowing residents to reminisce about Shanghai's past," says Mo Liangjin, director of the publicity department of Jing'an district.

Huang Min says she could not wait to see how the building she used to live in now looks.

"It's really reassuring to see that the western compound has retained its original layout," Huang Min says.

"They have even left the nail holes on these wooden windows intact. They look exactly like how they used to," she says, referring to the windows of the building. "It is nice that they have retained these little details, many of which are etched in our memories."

Zhang Lin contributed to the story.

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"It is really reassuring to see the western compound has retained its original layout."

Huang Min, 68, a former resident of Zhang Yuan

Top left: The street scene of the reopened Zhang Yuan, or Zhang's Garden, in Shanghai. LIN SHUJUAN / CHINA DAILY **Top right:** The reopening celebration of the residential compound held on Sunday. **Above left:** Built in 1882, Zhang Yuan became a residential compound in the 1920s. PHOTOS BY XIAO MINGLIANG / FOR CHINA DAILY **Above right:** Huang Min, 68, a former resident of Zhang Yuan, is invited to revisit the compound before its reopening. LIN SHUJUAN / CHINA DAILY

Rare works of 17th century artists on show at Long Museum

By **ZHANG KUN** in Shanghai
zhangkun@chinadaily.com.cn

The Long Museum in Shanghai is presenting some of its finest traditional Chinese artworks at the ongoing exhibition titled *The Era of Brilliant Stars — Masters from Early Qing Dynasty Painting and Calligraphy*.

The latest in a series of exhibitions celebrating the Long Museum's 10th anniversary, the showcase opened on Sunday and features the works of 10 Chinese artists who were active in the 17th century.

It features a total of 33 sets of artworks, half of which are on public display for the first time.

In this exhibition, the works of artists with the same surname — Wang Shimin (1592-1680), Wang Jian (1598-1677), Wang Hui (1632-1717), and Wang Yuanqi (1642-1715) — are showcased together in the section Four Wangs.

Together with Wu Li (1632-1718) and Yun Shouping (1633-90), the six artists are collectively known as the "Six Masters of Qing Dynasty (1644-1911)" or the "orthodox" landscape painters, says Xie Xiaodong, curator of the exhibition.

Among the six masters, Wu had quite a unique life experience as a Catholic priest. His paintings combined elements and techniques from Chinese classical masters, as well as Western aesthetics, making him an interesting figure for the research about exchanges and integration between Chinese and Western art.

The four monks: Hongren (1610-63), Kuncan (1612-92), Bada Shanren (1626-1705) and Shitao (1630-1724) are sometimes referred to "four monks of the early Qing Dynasty", as they represented more individualized styles and drew inspiration from nature and the spiritual world. Although these four didn't enjoy as much prominence as the six masters, their influence lingered on through the centuries and they influenced many modern Chinese painters, such as Ren Bonian and Qi Baishi, says Xie.

Together, these artists brought traditional Chinese art to new heights and created an era of unprecedented prosperity, says Liu Yiqian, the founder of the private museum in Shanghai.

An expert of these 17th-century masters, Liu wrote the foreword for the exhibition. "It's been almost 30 years since I started to collect ancient Chinese paintings and calligraphy," he writes. "I have a particular fondness for works by the four Wangs, Wu Li, Yun Shouping and the four monks. As a matter of fact, it's not exaggerated to call such fondness fanatic."

Liu recalls the first piece of Chinese painting he collected — a landscape painting by Wang Yuanqi that he paid 110,000 yuan ($15,257) for in 1995.

In 2005, Liu put the artwork up for auction in support of the newly established Beijing Council International Auction company. The painting was sold for 2.5 million yuan.

"If we considered it from the perspective of input-output ratio, you could say it was an incredibly good investment," he says.

Two years ago, he saw the painting again on auction, and bought it back for 8 million yuan.

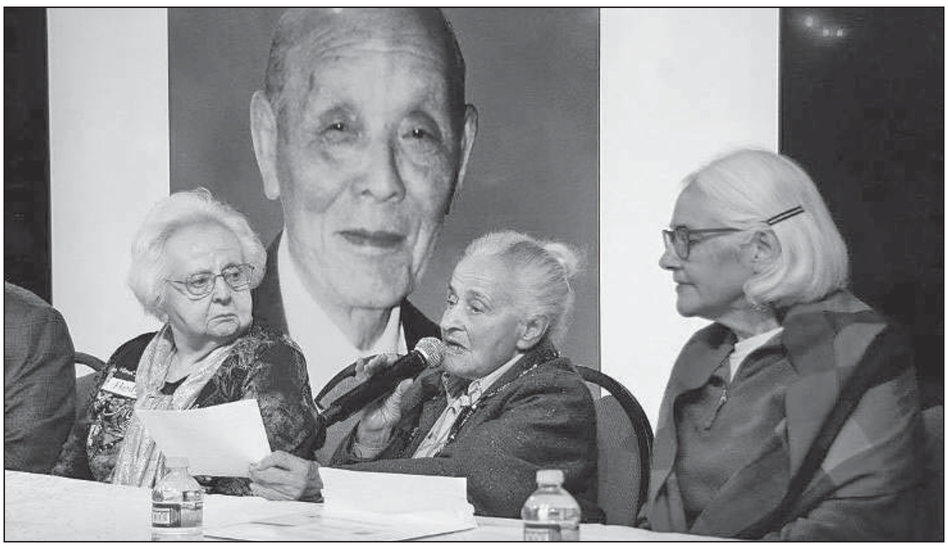
"Back then I didn't have so much understanding of these artists or their work, so it is normal to make mistakes in your journey of life," he explains.

Above: *Old Woods, Bamboos and Rock*, ink on paper, by Wu Li (1632-1718), a Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) landscape painter.
Right: *Mountains and Trees*, ink and color on paper, by Wang Yuanqi (1642-1715). PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

If you go

The Era of Brilliant Stars — Masters from Early Qing Dynasty Painting and Calligraphy
9 am-5 pm, Tuesday-Sunday, Nov 27-Feb 28, 2023;
Gallery No 5, Long Museum (West Bund), 3398 Longteng Avenue, Shanghai.

LIFE



A resolute spirit

Lotte Lustig Marcus, a Jewish refugee in Shanghai in 1939, was a woman whose strength of character, intelligence, resourcefulness and courage will be remembered, **Ho Manli** reports.

Lotte Lustig Marcus, one of the last of the "Shanghailanders" — the 18,000 European Jewish refugees who fled to Shanghai to escape Nazi persecution during World War II — died at her home in Carmel, California, on Nov 19 at age 95.

A clinical psychologist well known for treating trauma sufferers, she was also active in humanitarian and educational work with migrant workers and multiple sclerosis patients.

In March 1938, two months before her 11th birthday, Lotte Marcus saw Adolf Hitler march triumphantly into her native Vienna after the Anschluss, the union of Austria and Nazi Germany, shattered the third-largest Jewish community in Europe and precipitated a refugee crisis.

The lives of 185,000 Austrian Jews changed overnight under the ensuing Nazi reign of terror. Lotte's father Oskar was fired from his job at the Austrian State Bank. Because she was Jewish, Lotte could no longer attend school or participate in the ice-skating shows she loved.

Nazi authorities told Jews they could leave if they could produce "proof of emigration" to some place that would accept them. However, as evidenced by the Evian Conference in July 1938, most Western nations refused to open their doors to Jewish refugees.

"It is difficult today to re-create the terrible climate of rejection and humiliation that existed for us," Lotte later wrote.

Lotte's father copied the addresses of all those with their surname of Lustig from American telephone directories, and Lotte wrote to them asking for help in her schoolgirl English. "We got almost 48 replies — all equally polite, equally firm that they couldn't help," Lotte recalled.

Then on Oct 18, 1938, Lotte wrote: "My father found himself standing in a long line in front of a building because someone had told him that the Chinese consul was giving out visas to Shanghai. My father happened to have our passports on him. He stood in line and retrieved (the) visas — 'just in case', he told us."

My late father, Ho Feng Shan, the Chinese consul general in Vienna, had devised an ingenious strategy to save Jews by issuing visas to the only accessible entry point in war-torn China — the port city of Shanghai. Shanghai required no entry documents, but the visas facilitated safe passage out of Nazi-occupied territories and put Shanghai on the map as a refuge of last resort for Jews.

To a Western European of that time, Shanghai was simply unheard of, and Lotte's mother Grete was horrified, she recalled. "Our expectations had been to migrate to a Western country — America, England, Australia, France, etc." Or even to neighboring Switzerland, Lotte said, until her mother learned that close friends had been murdered by the person they had trusted to guide them across the border.

Then, on Nov 9 and 10, the Nazis orchestrated an overnight anti-Jewish rampage in Austria and Germany, during which Jewish stores were looted, Jewish synagogues burned, and 30,000 Jewish males, including Lotte's uncle Alfred, were arrested and deported to concentration camps.

"In December, Alfred's body was sent to us. He died, we were told, of pneumonia, which he allegedly caught working in the freezing cold on road construction wearing the famed striped pajamas," Lotte recalled. "It was then that Shanghai no longer loomed as a distant possibility but became an immediate necessity."

In January 1939, Lotte and her parents set sail for Shanghai on the *Conte Biancamano*, one of the luxury liners of the Italian Lloyd Triestino Company which engaged in war profiteering by ferrying Jewish refugees to Shanghai and charging them for first-class tickets.

Arriving in a Shanghai ravaged by war and under brutal Japanese occupation could not have been a starker contrast to Vienna, or more shocking to European middle-class sensibilities, Lotte recalled, especially for her mother, who never recovered.

For the next eight years, Lotte's family survived with her father trading his stamp collection and Lotte taking odd jobs, including at a Chinese department store that sold tea biscuits to local foreigners. At the end of the day, Lotte recalled, she would scrape the bits of sugar at the bottom of the biscuit tin to bring home to her mother.

She utilized her English-language skills and ran errands for Chinese merchants. Every three months, she sold her thick brown hair by the ounce. She even started a little business with one of her boyfriends, turning Chinese comic books into bundles of toilet paper.

She was the first love of the most well-known Shanghailander, W. Michael Blumenthal, who later became the US secretary of the treasury in the Carter administration. She called him "Werner" and they remained friends for life.

In 1943, the Japanese ordered all the "stateless" Jewish refugees to move into a special designated area in Hongkou, which already had 100,000 Chinese residents. Living conditions became even harsher, with 10 people squeezed into one room, Lotte said. Dire poverty, hunger, disease and death were commonplace, and every summer, Lotte recalled, so was amoebic dysentery.

Not long afterward, Lotte's father died of kidney cancer, leaving a teenage Lotte to support herself and her mother until 1947, when they were able to emigrate to the United States. After arriving in Los Angeles, Lotte found a job as a legal secretary at the Hollywood movie studio Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, where she met the writer Alan Marcus. They were married in 1952 and settled in Carmel, California.

That is where I met Lotte in 2003. I had been researching and documenting the history of my father's rescue activities in Vienna and learned that she still possessed the passports and visas that my father's consulate had issued.

By then, Lotte had raised three children, finished college, obtained her master's degree and, in 1985, at the age of 57, earned a PhD in psychology. She had a successful clinical practice and had turned the post-traumatic stress she suffered from her wartime experience into a means to help others.

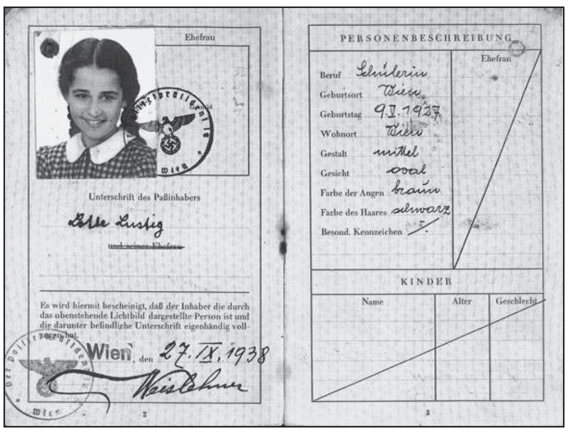
Our meeting was a revelation to both of us. For Lotte, learning that the visas her father obtained had a face behind them, that it had not been just a random bit of bureaucracy, but an act of kindness, led her to see the past with fresh eyes. For me, Lotte's ability to transcend her childhood traumas and memories, to see past experiences with adult eyes and to place them in a larger context, gave me a fuller understanding of that complex history.

For the next 19 years, Lotte spoke and wrote with unflinching eloquence about the harsh realities faced by the Jewish refugees in Shanghai. She gave credit where credit was due: to the wealthy local Jews and Jewish relief organizations who provided housing, soup kitchens and schooling for the refugee children, and facilitated the creation of an exile community.

She spoke with regret that neither she, nor her fellow refugees, ever learned the culture or language of their host country. The common struggle for survival had precluded any real social interactions with their Chinese neighbors, to whom the refugees were just another added "sliver of *nakojin*" ("foreigner" in Shanghai dialect), albeit poorer, Lotte recalled.

She decried a recent revisionist trend that embellished and distorted this Shanghai history into a "fictive tale" of hearts-and-flowers. "Nothing could be further from the essence of the actual experience," she wrote.

In her last years, Lotte often said how "lucky" she had been in life. But it was more than luck. It was Lotte herself: her strength of character, her intelligence, her resourcefulness, and her courage. My father would have been proud to have saved someone like her.



Top left: Lotte Lustig Marcus (center) on a panel of survivors speaking at a 2019 program honoring Ho Feng Shan, jointly sponsored by the Chinese and Israeli consulates in San Francisco. **Top right:** Lotte Marcus and her husband, Alan Marcus. **From middle:** The couple at their home in Carmel, California; Lotte Marcus and Ho Manli's first meeting in 2003; 11-year-old Lotte Marcus' passport photo.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF HO MANLI

Ho Manli, the daughter of the late Chinese diplomat rescuer Ho Feng Shan, has been researching and documenting her father's heroism for the past two decades. She was one of the foreign editors who helped launch China Daily in 1981 and has continued to work with the paper on major projects such as the 1990 Asian Games, the 2008 Beijing Olympics and the launching of the paper's US edition.

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Memories are made in a snap

Stephanie Stone
Second Thoughts

The autumn leaves were turning and falling and ginkgo trees laid carpets of golden leaves in the parks in Beijing.

A friend and I were in one such park admiring the autumn colors and, of course, taking some photos. She and I are happy to go the extra mile to get a good shot, so, at one point we were lying on a bed of fallen foliage with our hair sprawled out and the camera positioned above us to capture the scene.

Moments later, two older Chinese women offered to take the photo for us, to get a better angle. "Sure! Thank you!," we said. That offer led to a full-blown photo shoot with several more women joining in to make sure we got the perfect shot. We were instructed on how to pose. The older women shooed away onlookers who were obstructing the background. Several other women scooped up leaves and tossed them in the air, and at the right moment the camera clicked away, capturing my friend and I in a shower of falling leaves. It was quite the spectacle. We laughed and thanked them for their help and talked about it for many minutes later. It was one of the most memorable experiences of the day.

I've had many such experiences since moving to China. During one trip to an extant volcano in the Inner Mongolia autonomous region, a group of university students made sure that everyone on our bus tour sat themselves in the middle of the road to get a lovely picture of us with the volcano rising majestically behind us. It was such a laugh!

The stereotype of the Chinese tourist with five cameras hanging off his neck is one I was well familiar with. And while, yes, I've seen more people taking pictures here than anywhere else I've traveled, I absolutely adore it. What some may scoff at, I find endearing.

I see husbands taking photos of their wives, making sure she's posed "just so" and moving this way and that to get the best lighting. I've had savvy youngsters take the camera away from their parents and take my photo (because, frankly, they're better at it than their folks). I see groups of elderly women staging full-blown photo shoots for each other in scenic spots, making sure not a hair is out of place on their friend so everyone looks photo perfect.

I think the process of taking photos here is often more about the community experience than the final product. Sure, having cute and lovely photos to show off on your socials is nice. We all love that. But spending time with your friends laughing about how silly you were in front of XYZ monument, or how a leaf stuck to your face when they were thrown in the air, or how a random stranger, when asked to take your photo, suddenly becomes a professional photographer, delighted to be asked, is its own reward.

Photos capture memories. In this type of photo culture, taking the photos of themselves (whether elaborately with friends, or with the help of a stranger) becomes part of the memory, and enriches it. And I find that so very charming.

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SPORTS

FIFA WORLD CUP 2022

Gallant Tunisia trips up Les Bleus

But defeat for France proves immaterial as Deschamps' defending champion still advances as group winner

AL RAYYAN, Qatar — As France searched for a late equalizer, the players on Tunisia's bench were watching another World Cup match on TV hoping for a goal.

Neither of them came, giving Tunisia a momentous 1-0 win over defending champion France that still wasn't enough to prevent the North African team from being eliminated.

Wahbi Khazri scored in the 58th minute on Wednesday to lead Tunisia to only its third victory at a World Cup tournament. But in stoppage time, the Tunisians on the sidelines were more interested in the other Group D game, crowding around a TV screen on the bench hoping Denmark would be able to score against Australia — a circumstance that would have lifted Tunisia into second place and also into the last 16 in Qatar.

"We were praying for a Denmark goal but it never came," Khazri said. "But that's the thing with soccer, you should only count on yourself. We didn't do enough in the first two games, otherwise we'd be through."

France ended up winning the group with six points, ahead of Australia on goal difference. Tunisia finished with four points in third place. Denmark, which lost to Australia 1-0, ended up in last place with one point.

It was France's first loss at the World Cup since the 2014 quarterfinals, when Germany won 1-0.

Khazri broke the deadlock early in the second half, running at the heart of the French defense and beating two players before poking the ball into the bottom corner.

He fell to his knees in celebration and was mobbed by teammates. When he got back up, he made a heart shape to the Tunisian fans behind the goal and then limped off, appearing to hurt himself as he fell when scoring his 25th international goal and his third at World Cups.

France forward Antoine Griezmann thought he had equalized in the eighth minute of stoppage time but he was ruled offside following a video review.

France's Randal Kolo Muani (12) and Tunisia's Mohamed Ali Ben Romdhane entangle during Wednesday's World Cup Group D match between Tunisia and France at Education City Stadium in Al Rayyan, Qatar. AP

With France already qualified for the knockout stage, coach Didier Deschamps rested Griezmann, Kylian Mbappe and most of his regular starters. Only four of the team lining up at the beginning had even started a World Cup match before.

"It will be a good lesson for them. Now they know what the highest level is all about, against a Tunisia team that was supercharged," Deschamps said. "But we were too timid, late in the tackle and made technical errors."

Deschamps defended his team selection further, saying the sizable goal difference over Australia was enough of a safety net, and said his first-choice players can thrive on fresh legs on Sunday.

"I think we'll see the benefit four days from now. We can't tick all the boxes," he said. "We were coming out of two high-intensity games and need to breathe fresh air. But we need to do better than we did. Our opponent punished us."

Khazri said he didn't believe France was disrespecting Tunisia by fielding such a weakened team.

"A lack of respect? No. (Aurelien) Tchouameni plays for Real Madrid and so does (Eduardo) Camavinga," Khazri said. "It's an honor to play against them. I grew up in a little corner of (French island) Corsica that nobody's ever heard of, so it's amazing for me to play at the World Cup."

Khazri's goal, however, prompted Deschamps to bring on Mbappe and Griezmann and the increased urgency almost led to an equalizer.

"I wanted to give Kylian 30 minutes, which is what I'd planned to do," Deschamps said.

Deschamps had selected more of a "C" team than a "B" team. Randal Kolo Muani struggled to make an impact at center forward and Kingsley Coman — who scored Bayern Munich's winner in the 2020 Champions League final — was isolated.

France central defender Raphael Varane, however, mopped up on the occasions Tunisia got close to the penalty area in the first half.

> "We were praying for a Denmark goal but it never came. But that's the thing with soccer, you should only count on yourself. We didn't do enough in the first two games, otherwise we'd be through."
>
> **Wahbi Khazri,** who scored Tunisia's goal against France

France will face Poland in the last 16. The Poles finished second in Group C behind Argentina but advanced on goal difference ahead of Mexico.

Rare appearance

With goalkeeper Hugo Lloris among the rested, 37-year-old Steve Mandanda played only the second World Cup match of his long career. The other was also in the team's third group game four years ago.

Mandanda's appearance means Lloris will have to wait a little longer to equal defender Lilian Thuram's national record of 142 appearances. Lloris is on 141.

Striker Olivier Giroud also has to be patient. He still has 51 goals, equal with Thierry Henry as France's all-time leading scorer.

Pavard 'not ready'

Deschamps explained why he didn't select Benjamin Pavard for the match. The World Cup-winning defender started the opening game against Australia.

"I had several discussions with him," Deschamps said, "and decided he was not ready to play."

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

Aussie elation spells dejection for Danes

Australian soccer may have a new golden generation.

Mathew Leckie scored and the Socceroos beat Denmark 1-0 on Wednesday to advance to the last 16 at the World Cup for only the second time.

"I'm just so proud we've been able to put smiles on people's faces," coach Graham Arnold said, noting this is the first Australian team to win two straight games at a World Cup. "Maybe we're talking about a new golden generation."

The last Socceroos team to earn that honor got Australia into the knockout stage in 2006. This team did it again, and Arnold believes the achievement is worthy of a national holiday.

"Give the people a day off," he said. "I think there will be some hangovers and some joy."

The leader of the new generation could be Leckie, who collected a pass near the center circle from Riley McGree in the 60th minute and moved around a defender before hitting a left-footed shot past Denmark goalkeeper Kasper Schmeichel.

"I went left and swang the left foot," Leckie said, who was then mobbed by his teammates on the field and off the bench. "I think I got slapped in the head about 100 times."

Now Leckie wants more.

"We want to dream big," he said. "I think the key was when we came to this tournament we always said we wanted to get out of the group. And now we've done that. Now the most important thing is to get ourselves ready because we worked super hard tonight. I think most of the boys are exhausted. That's exactly what we needed to do to get a result today."

Australia finished with six points in Group D. Defending champion France won the group on goal difference despite losing to Tunisia 1-0.

The World Cup proved to be a major disappointment for Denmark after reaching the semifinals at last year's 2020 European Championship. The Danes slogged through a 0-0 draw in their opening match with Tunisia and then lost 2-1 to France.

Denmark's Jesper Lindstrom beats Australia's Aziz Behich to the ball during Wednesday's World Cup Group D match at Al Janoub Stadium in Al Wakrah, Qatar. AP

Denmark is 10th in the FIFA rankings and following its run to the last four at the Euros in the summer of 2021 had been touted by some observers as a dark horse in Qatar.

Denmark coach Kasper Hjulmand was unable to say why one of the world's top-ranked teams played so poorly.

"No explanation," he said. "Questions will be asked. But I think it's important just to get a bit of distance to it so I can think rationally. I can't do that right now. The emotions are too big. The frustrations are too big.

"It really irritates and frustrates me, and I am really sad."

Hjulmand added: "There is no doubt that we did not reach our level… it is my responsibility.

"There was too much emotion and too little quality. All my waking hours I tried to prepare as best I could.

"There was a lack of enthusiasm and coherence… where did that come from?"

Denmark dominated possession through much of the game but couldn't generate enough chances against Australia's tenacious defense.

Mathias Jensen had one of his team's best chances of the game in the 10th minute, but Australia goalkeeper Mathew Ryan, who plays in Denmark for FC Copenhagen, came up with a point-blank save.

Australia started the second half well as Jackson Irvine sent a good chance over the crossbar. But the Socceroos quickly reverted to defending before breaking through with Leckie's goal.

By the end of the match, all 11 Denmark players were pressing for an equalizer.

On two late corners, Schmeichel sprinted upfield to put himself into the mix in front of the goal. Ryan caught one corner and Schmeichel scurried back. He came all the way back upfield on a second corner with about a minute remaining, but that attempt also amounted to nothing.

Hjulmand said the buck stopped with him.

"We did not reach our level. There is not doubt about that," the 50-year-old said. "What else is certain is it is my responsibility."

AGENCIES

Cup's cute companion scores with Chinese fans

Do you remember your first World Cup mascot? Mine was probably Pique, the sassy, mustachioed jalapeno pepper with the maracas and a massive sombrero, which dominated the marketing for the 1986 World Cup in Mexico.

He was everywhere — in cereal boxes, on soda cans and as a series of small plastic toys in Kinder Eggs, among many other places.

Then along came Italia '90, by which time I was deep into my teens, and the weird, football-headed stick figure, named Ciao, apparently, didn't quite grab my imagination in the same way. Perhaps it was because I was older, but he did not resonate with me as much as the epic Pavarotti-sung theme *Nessun Dorma* did.

Other than Striker, the dog from

James McCarthy
Extra time

USA '94, I can't put a name to, nor do I have any real recollection of, some of the nightmare-inducing mascots that followed. In fact, watching last week's opening ceremony for Qatar '22 was akin to enduring a hallucinatory fever dream — colorful, oversized plush monstrosities staring at me through my TV screen in pin-sharp high-definition.

It occurred to me, that, in many people's consciousness, there is a sweet spot where a World Cup mascot retains its appeal. They are predominantly aimed at kids, I suppose, and that's why Pique remains the pinnacle of puppets in my mind, but Ciao might enjoy a similar affection from someone younger.

However, the power of the mascot seems far more compelling to a wider range of age groups here in China.

Bing Dwen Dwen, the cuddly panda representing the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympic Games, caused a frenzy earlier this year, when star-struck fans couldn't get their hands quickly enough on merchandise featuring the character, resulting in rocketing prices and a whole Bing Dwen Dwen black-market industry. Yet, he was ubiquitous on my WeChat 'Moments' timeline, and those posing with their space panda swag were all adults. It seemed like a cultural touchstone, which is why even I have one, right here, by my desk…

Last week, I saw the same social media clamor as La'eeb, the mascot for this World Cup, took his global bow.

Seemingly a cross between Casper the Friendly Ghost and an untethered kite, La'eeb is actually based on the *keffiyeh* and *agal*, the main elements of traditional Arab head dress.

I watched as my 30-year-old girlfriend cooed over the cartoon figure, and spent most of the opening ceremony laughing at memes and cute posts on microblogging site Weibo. This was further fueled by images of a young Qatari, gesticulating wide-eyed at his nation's poor opening-game performance, being captured by the cameras of CCTV5. Almost instantly, comparisons between the young Arab and the equally cherubic mascot, started springing up all over the place, propelled by quick-witted Chinese social media users.

Such is the draw of the mascot, here, that people in my WeChat contacts, who have no interest in football most of the time, are sending me La'eeb stickers in chat groups and messages.

So, where did all this mascot malarkey start? For that we have to go all the way back to the 1966 World Cup in England.

World Cup Willie (stop giggling at the back), a Union Flag-emblazoned Lion was, arguably, the first ever official mascot to grace a global sporting event.

The first official Olympic Mascot didn't make its debut until Munich in 1972, eight years and two World Cup companions later.

Willie was conceived by freelance children's book illustrator Reg Hoye, and was featured in his own comic strip leading up to and during the event. He appeared on a myriad of products, creating a whole new World Cup merchandising industry. He even had his own song, originally sung by Scottish skiffle artist Lonnie Donegan.

Four years later, he was given a makeover and, wearing a sombrero, became the mascot for the England team heading to the 1970 World Cup in Mexico.

So, depending on whether you're a fan of these cutesy companions, or find them a detestable distraction from the important business of watching your team play, you can thank — or curse — the English.

Given the way Group B's final fixtures ended, I would be lying if I said I wasn't choosing to do the latter anyway.

SPORTS

FIFA WORLD CUP 2022

Messi, Argentina find their mojo

Despite penalty miss, superstar delivers dazzling display to secure two-time champion's spot in last 16

Poland's Robert Lewandowski (right) and Argentina's Cristian Romero battle for possession during Wednesday's World Cup Group C game at Stadium 974 in Doha, Qatar. Argentina won 2-0 as both sides progressed to the last 16. REUTERS

Rest easy, soccer fans. Lionel Messi will grace the World Cup stage at least one more time.

The Argentina great had a penalty saved but his team still beat Poland 2-0 on Wednesday after second-half goals from Alexis Mac Allister and Julian Alvarez and advanced to the last 16.

After opening the World Cup with a shocking 2-1 loss to Saudi Arabia in one of the biggest upsets in the tournament's history, Argentina wound up finishing in first place in Group C and will next play Australia — a surprise qualifier for the knockout stage.

Messi rolls into Saturday's game suddenly in a strong position in likely his final World Cup.

"Now another World Cup begins." Messi said, "and hopefully we can continue to do what we did today."

As for Poland, it was ultimately a happy night, too, because the team went through as the group's second-place team — on goal difference ahead of Mexico — and will next play defending champion France.

Messi ended up relieved after failing to score a penalty for the second straight World Cup. It was awarded after he was hit in the face by the flailing hand of Poland goalkeeper Wojciech Szczesny, who made amends by diving to his left to block Messi's kick in the 39th minute.

"I'm upset that I missed the penalty, but the team came back stronger after my error," he said.

A largely pro-Argentina crowd, waving flags and scarfs and beating drums behind both goals, had been sweeping Messi and his team along at the 44,000-seat Stadium 974 and they didn't stop after the penalty. Within seconds, a chant of "MESSI! MESSI!" immediately reverberated around the venue in a bid to keep their idol's head high.

And the roars were even louder at the start of the second half, first after Mac Allister's goal — a scruffy finish from Nahuel Molina's cut-back from the right — in the first minute and soon after as news filtered through that Mexico had taken the lead against Saudi Arabia, which started the day in third place.

Playing an Argentine-record 22nd World Cup game, Messi never stopped surging forward and he was a menace all game to Poland with his dribbling ability and vision. One 40-meter solo run saw him weave past three opponents, drift past another only to misfire as he took aim.

The match was billed as a head-to-head between Messi and Poland striker Robert Lewandowski, perhaps the best center forward in the world, but it proved to be a mismatch.

"If Messi played with us and Robert played for Argentina, Robert would have scored five goals," Poland coach Czeslaw Michniewicz said. "Robert needs to be helped and the match was only played in our half."

Messi wasn't involved in either goal, though. For the second, Enzo Fernandez scooped a pass to Alvarez — starting ahead of regular striker Lautaro Martinez — and he took one touch before curling his shot into the top corner in the 67th minute.

Things couldn't have gone better for Argentina coach Lionel Scaloni, who made more bold changes in bringing in Alvarez, Fernandez and Molina and seeing them play a part in the goals. Mac Allister, meanwhile, didn't start against Saudi Arabia and has added energy in midfield in the two games since.

Suddenly, Argentina looks more like the team which entered the World Cup on a 36-match unbeaten run and as one of the tournament favorites, a year after winning the Copa America.

"We wanted to make amends for that Saudi Arabia game because we knew we could play better," Mac Allister said. "We've managed to find that calm we needed ... we played well collectively and it fills us with confidence."

The final whistle blew with Poland players still unsure if they were advancing, given the Mexico-Saudi Arabia game was ongoing. At one stage, Poland and Mexico were only separated by the number of yellow cards they had collected in the group stage — Poland had five compared to Mexico's seven — and Michniewicz was desperately urging his team to not give away fouls in the final minutes.

A stoppage-time goal by the Saudis meant their match finished 2-1 in favor of Mexico, whose goal difference was inferior by one to Poland.

Upon confirmation they had advanced, Poland's players squirted water from their bottles in the middle of the field and jumped up and down.

"Sometimes," Michniewicz said, "losses can be bittersweet."

'Crazy' schedule

Scaloni criticized a schedule that will see Argentina have to play within three days of beating Poland. "We don't want to be euphoric because I think it's crazy, these conditions," he said.

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Maradona would be 'super happy', says Leo

Lionel Messi waves to Argentina fans following his team's World Cup win over Poland on Wednesday. AP

Lionel Messi believes Diego Maradona would be "super happy" after he led Argentina into the World Cup last 16 on Wednesday thanks to a 2-0 win over Poland.

Messi became his country's most capped player at the tournament with a 22nd appearance surpassing his legendary compatriot who died just over two years ago.

"I learned it recently, I didn't know it. It's a pleasure to be able to continue to achieve these kinds of records. I think Diego would be super happy for me, because he always showed me a lot of affection, he was always happy when things went well for me," said Messi.

Despite missing a penalty — his 39th career failure from the spot — the Argentina captain said he was "happy" with this "big match".

"We achieved our first objective, which was to get out of the group after starting the way we did (a shock 2-1 loss against Saudi Arabia)," said Messi.

"I was really frustrated to have missed the penalty, because I knew that a goal could change the whole match, that it makes you play in a different way. But I think that from the penalty I missed, the team came out stronger."

Messi, who still needs a World Cup winner's medal to cement his legacy as one of the sport's greatest players, believes Argentina is moving up through the gears at precisely the right time.

"After the first goal, everything went our way. We started doing again what we had been trying to do since the start of the World Cup, but which we hadn't been able to achieve for various reasons.

"Having been able to do it today, it gives us confidence for the future."

Next up for Argentina is a last-16 clash against Australia on Saturday.

"We know that now everything will be very difficult. That whoever the opponent, it will be complicated. We have seen recently, at our own expense, that any opponent can play a good game and win."

AFP

Mexico escape act falls short in rare early elimination

Mexico's Luis Chavez is inconsolable following his team's World Cup elimination. Despite a 2-1 win over Saudi Arabia on Wednesday, Mexico failed to reach the last 16 for the first time since 1978. AFP

LUSAIL, Qatar — For a long time after the final whistle, Luis Chavez crouched on the field in anguish.

He had scored in Mexico's furious attempt to stay alive at the World Cup, but the 2-1 victory on Wednesday over Saudi Arabia wasn't enough. Because of Argentina's 2-0 victory over Poland in a simultaneous match, Mexico failed to advance out of its group for the first time since 1978.

"We had a chance to qualify," Chavez said glumly. "We didn't achieve it."

Mexico had reached the knockout round at the last seven World Cups, second only to Brazil, which has gone through to the last 16 since 1986.

El Tri went into the match at Lusail Stadium needing both a victory and help from Poland playing across town against Argentina to advance in Group C. Argentina's victory meant goal difference came into play — and Mexico didn't have enough of them.

Henry Martin scored in the 48th minute to give El Tri hope, and the team's chances got even better with Chavez's goal on a freekick four minutes later.

Mexico tried desperately in the final 20 minutes to get another goal — including an effort by Uriel Antuna in the 87th minute that was ruled offside — but came up short.

"We needed one more goal. I didn't know exactly what happened at the end," said veteran Mexico goalkeeper Guillermo Ochoa, who was playing in his fifth World Cup. "For us, the object was to score three or four goals. It's a shame."

Salem Aldawsari scored in second-half stoppage time for Saudi Arabia, which was eliminated along with Mexico despite beating Argentina in its opening match.

Martin's goal ended Mexico's 431-minute scoring drought at the World Cup, dating back to its second group match at the 2018 tournament in Russia. It was the team's longest ever stretch without a goal at the tournament.

Mexico opened the tournament in Qatar with a 0-0 draw against Poland but fell 2-0 to Lionel Messi and Argentina.

Mexico hadn't been eliminated from the group stage since the World Cup in Argentina 44 years ago. El Tri didn't qualify for the 1982 World Cup in Spain, and was banned from the 1990 event in Italy for using overage players at an under-20 tournament.

"I must say that I assume all the responsibility for this massive failure," Mexico coach Gerardo "Tata" Martino said.

Mexico advanced to the last 16 in its last seven appearances — but no further. El Tri came to Qatar looking to play in an elusive "*quinto partido*" (fifth game) for the first time since Mexico hosted the tournament in 1986.

Saudi Arabia had one of the tournament's biggest-ever upsets when it beat Argentina 2-1. But the Green Falcons couldn't pull off another surprise in their second match, a 2-0 loss to Poland.

The Saudis reached the last 16 back in 1994, the team's World Cup debut, but haven't made it past the group stage since.

"Tonight it was difficult to breathe with the intensity Mexico put into the match," Saudi Arabia coach Herve Renard said.

Many on the Saudi team were also part of the squad that went to the 2018 World Cup. But none play outside their home country. Twelve players on the roster are with Al Hilal, which has won a record 18 Saudi league championships.

Mexico dominated the first half. Orbelin Pineda had one of the best of three good chances for El Tri, but it was easily grabbed by Saudi Arabia goalkeeper Mohammed Alowais in the 25th minute.

The game turned quickly in Mexico's favor with Martin's goal, but the celebration was muted. Chavez's freekick in the 52nd that went into the upper corner just out of Alowais' reach brought Mexico's reserves rushing onto the field.

Hirving Lozano nearly had a third goal but he was offside. Chavez had another freekick that missed as Mexico tried in vain to score more goals.

Martino had been roundly criticized for the lack of scoring. He had already been questioned over some of his choices, including his decision to leave all-time leading scorer Javier "Chicharito" Hernandez off the team.

Hernandez, who now plays for the LA Galaxy in Major League Soccer, scored the team's last goal in a 2-1 group-stage victory over South Korea in Russia.

After the match, Martino said his contract with the Mexico team had ended with the final whistle.

Ochoa, however, wasn't ready to say if he'd still be with the team in 2026 when Mexico, the United States and Canada will host the World Cup.

"We will see. We will see," Ochoa said. "Tonight I'm sad so I have to think about that. But maybe that could happen."

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